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"WHO ARE YOU?" DEMANDED HALDRICK, AS SOON AS HE FOUND HIS VOICE.
"WISTAH!" REPLIED THE LITTLE MAIDEN, WITH THE UTMOST COMPOSURE.

Wistah,

THE CHILD SPY;

OR,

The Old Scout of the Wabash.

BY GEORGE GLEASON.

CHAPTER I.

THE QUAKER FAMILY.

"Be the Crass! it's a rooster I hear crowin' this minute, or me nem isn't Michael Denny."

"I believe you are right, my friend. The sound is very homelike, and proves that we are approaching some sort of a habitation."

"There ag'in! Haldrick, me b'y, d'ye hear that dog a-barkin'? Somebody's choppin' wood, too. Be the same token, we'll have something better'n the trees to shelter us to-night."

Deep in the heart of a virgin forest, two horsemen were threading a blazed bridle-way in the western part of the territory of Indiana.

One of them was a young man of uncommonly fine appearance, tall, manly, and a little dignified in his general deportment. His face bore the stamp of refinement, mingled with an expression of self-reliance and fearless pride that told of conscious worth. There was something soldierly in his bearing, set off by the semi-military character of his dress. He wore a sort of blouse, confined at the waist by a hunting-belt, a cap, buckskin trousers, and yellow-topped boots of elegant workmanship.

The other man was as different from his companion as he could well be. Imagine a freckled face, a mass of red hair, a pair of roguish blue eyes standing guard over a comical little nose of the pug order, and a frame of no extraordinary size, but tough and wiry as whalebone—and you have him just as you meet him every day; the veritable son of Erin. His vesture consisted chiefly of a "claw-hammer" coat, corduroy knee-breeches, black stockings, and a hat that was nearly all crown. His feet were incased in pumps, adorned with bright steel buckles.

Both were well mounted and equipped, showing that they had calculated the dangers of a journey through a region swarming with hostile savages.

"Evidently we are near the abode of some white settler," said the young man with a gratified look. "Cocks crowing, dogs barking, and the pleasant ring of the woodman's ax—ah, Denny, those are sounds that warm one's heart in a place like this."

"Now ye're sp'akin' Gospel," said the Irishman, with emphasis. "They tell the weary traveler that he's 'bout to have something better than a baich-root fur a pilly. Divil a wurrid am I goin' to complain now, fur bein' at the ind iv our ride, at all, at all."

"Do you think we are at the end of our ride? This can hardly be my uncle's house."

"That it ain't, yer Honor, but mayhap yer uncle's shanty squats close by. Thim fellers back on White River tould us this track would lade us to the Wabash, somewhere above Post Vincennes, and that's about where the ould gen-

tleman lives, you know. Begorra, it strikes me we can't be fur from the Wabash this minute."

"Truly, we have traveled a good distance," returned the other, "and ought to be in the vicinity of the river by this time. Let us hope that to-morrow will be the last day of our journey. Ah! look yonder."

They drew rein simultaneously, and contemplated the pleasant scene that burst upon their view. They were on the edge of a large clearing, in the center of which stood a house of unusual dimensions for such a time and place. It was a roomy, two-story structure, plain and prim-looking, and nicely finished doors and windows, and an air of comfort about it calculated to gladden the eyes of the weary traveler. Beyond it, where two or three out-buildings stood, was a troop of chickens and a full fledged peacock, giving the whole scene a farmlike appearance, such as one would not expect to find in this remote wilderness.

At a little distance from where the travelers had halted a huge negro was chopping wood. His sleeves were rolled up, his shirt open at the breast, and his black skin shone with perspiration as he worked. Near him, sitting on a log, was a white man, amusing himself with a couple of playful dogs.

This person was evidently the proprietor of the backwoods mansion. He was large in his build—even disposed to corpulence—with a round, rubicund face, blooming with rosy health, and beaming with excessive good-humor. His dress was a monotonous suit of brown, with a white neckerchief and a broad-brimmed hat.

While smiling at the antics of the dogs, the latter suddenly broke away from him, and came bounding down to the edge of the woods, barking fiercely. They had caught sight of the two horsemen. The negro stopped in his work, and looked after them in surprise, while the white man rose from the log and stared blankly at the strangers, as if inclined to lose faith in his eyes.

But he quickly regained his presence of mind, and cried out to the dogs in a rich, hearty voice:

"Ponto! Prince! Be off! Dost know thou barkest at men of thy master's own color? Get thee behind me, Ponto. Prince, to thy kennel, and hide that ugly head of thine."

The dogs slunk away, looking very much ashamed, and the horsemen rode forward into the clearing. The darky gazed open-mouthed at them, panting from his recent exertions, and rolling his eyes in a ludicrous manner. But the man in brown extended to them a cordial greeting.

"White faces are not seen every day in this part of the country," said he, in his full, refreshing voice, "and the sight of them is always a pleasure, as thou wilt imagine. Verily, 'tis but a rude life we lead in this heathen land, and our accommodations are not of the most approved sort, but such as we have we are every ready to share with strangers. Thou hailest from the East, if I conjecture rightly?"

"From Virginia," replied the young man. "We have had a long and tedious journey across the country. Our destination is the River Wabash. My name is, Lauren Haldrick."

"And mine is Michael Denny, plaze yer Honor,

from the County Tipperary, on the ould sod," put in the Irishman.

"And mine," said the Quaker—for a Quaker he certainly was, of the William Penn stock—"mine is Ephraim Shelbridge. It would not be a strange one to thee, hadst thou lived in Philadelphia. I am glad to know thee, and so will my family be. Thy destination is the River Wabash?"

"Yes."

"Then thy journey is almost at an end, for the river is not far away. But thou hadst better not complete it to-night. The sun is fast going down. Peradventure, it seemeth proper unto thee to stop in my house, and share its rude comforts till the morrow."

"Thanks for your kindness," returned Haldrick, hesitatingly, "but if the river is so near, perhaps it were better to finish our journey before dark. Probably you can direct us to the particular spot we desire to reach this evening."

"If I can, I will be glad to do so."

"Know you aught of a man named Lincoln residing hereabout?"

Ephraim Shelbridge looked up quickly, and asked:

"What may his Christian name be?"

"I presume he is called Old Josh Lincoln on the border."

"Know him? Why, everybody knows friend Joshua. There are few men in this region that are better known. He has done good service for the settlements on the frontier, and is sometimes called the Old Scout of the Wabash. Dost know him thyself?"

"He is my uncle."

"Thy uncle! I scarce could believe he was blessed with kinsfolk. He seems so lonely, poor fellow, that I never supposed he was bound to any one by so close a tie. But, my friend, I cannot permit thee to try the experiment of reaching his cabin to-night. It is a matter of more than two miles from my house to his, and it would be dark in the woods before it would be possible for thee to go so far. We will be pleased to have thee and thy man stay with us till morning, and then I will guide thee to thy uncle's abode. Alight from thy horses and come with me, for verily the women will soon have supper in readiness. Here, Caesar; thou wilt lay down the ax now, and put these animals in the stable. Be sure and feed them well, for they have traveled far."

Seeing at once that it would be the better plan to accept the invitation of the generous Quaker, Haldrick and Denny dismounted, and the negro took charge of their horses.

By this time two women were standing in the open door of the house, regarding the strangers with natural curiosity, and the sight of them may have had some influence in determining Haldrick to stay, for one of them was young and pretty. They disappeared within as the men approached.

Ephraim Shelbridge preceded his guests into the house, talking in his quaint, good-natured way as he went, but the Irishman followed with a show of reluctance, and kept glancing suspiciously at the darky as long as he could see him, while he vowed under his breath that "he

wouldn't hold it the brithth iv an inch above any thafe iv a nagur to run off wid a gintleman's baste ivery time he could git a chance." But he forgot his uneasiness in part when he found himself in a large, comfortable room, where everything was so homelike and pleasant that he lost all inclination to growl. There were three women present. One of them—a hale, robust woman, with a white handkerchief pinned round her neck—was introduced by the settler as "Martha, my wife." The younger one, who had specially attracted the young Virginian's attention, was Ruth, the daughter. The third was a wrinkled old creature, in a plain white cap and spectacles, who did not rise from her cushioned chair when the strangers were presented to her, and who was called Grandmother Shelbridge.

All shook hands with the two men, after the approved Quaker fashion. Haldrick felt a thrill pass through his frame as he took the little soft hand of Ruth; while she lifted her dark eyes shyly to his, and then dropped them with a burning blush. She was exceedingly pretty, this backwoods flower—plump in form, rich in complexion, and graceful as a reed. Her shining brown hair was brushed smoothly back from her forehead, and confined in heavy coils on the back of her head. Her dress was made of some plain drab material, but was very neat and becoming, and just short enough in the skirt to display a pretty little foot and well-turned ankle. Our hero was constrained to acknowledge to himself that he had never met a more charming creature than this same modest, unpretending Quaker lass.

The main room of the house was of considerable dimensions, plainly furnished, with a broad fireplace and a cheerful fire. There were doors opening into two other rooms, and a flight of rude stairs leading to the upper story, while the whole structure bore marks of having been erected with an eye to comfort, convenience, and permanent occupation as a home.

"Myself and Caesar are the only men who belong here, as thou wilt observe," remarked the settler when they were all seated about the hearth. "It will occur to thee, no doubt, that the women enjoy but a weak protection from the perils of the frontier."

"Candidly I am astonished," said the young Virginian promptly. "I could not have supposed that any man would take his family to a spot where it is absolutely dangerous to be safe, and there settle down defiantly among thousands of bloodthirsty barbarians. You are remote from any fort or settlement, and might be annihilated unbeknown to your fellow-men. Also, you have built your house with none of the ordinary conveniences for defense—"

"I did not come here to fight," interrupted Ephraim Shelbridge mildly. "I am a man of peace."

"Very good; but, as a man who is peacefully inclined, you should have sought a more peaceful locality. Had you built your house in view of some fort, you could have claimed its protection when threatened, but here you are in constant danger of your lives. It is not in the nature of Indians to long resist such a temptation as you are holding out to them."

"Thou reasonest after the manner of thy people, young man, and I blame thee not," said Ephraim, hitching up his trowsers at the knee, and leaning back in his chair complacently. "But, I assure thee, we have nothing to fear. I did not come with loud threats, and take possession of this land in defiance of the Indians' rights. By kindness I conquered them, and I receive kindness in return. Like the immortal William Penn, I bought the land from the poor savages, and dealt with them justly. Fear not for us, for we are safe."

Haldrick said no more on the subject, but he looked dubious. He was more than half under the impression that the honest Quaker would sooner or later see his error in trusting the Indians, and he could but think how dreadful might be the awakening.

At this juncture a fat negro woman came in from the kitchen, ostensibly to ask her mistress if she should serve supper at once, but likely for the purpose of quieting her own curiosity by staring broadly at the strangers. Receiving an affirmative answer to her inquiry, she set the table in the middle of the room, covered it with a snow-white cloth, and soon had supper ready. She rolled her large eyes toward the strangers as he announced the fact, and when they had all gathered round the board she stood like an ebony statue behind Haldrick's chair, until the silent grace, customary with the family, was over. Then she made herself as useful and polite as possible to the young gentleman, paying more attention to him than to any one else at the table.

When the repast was finished, and the tea-things cleared away, Cæsar brought in an armful of hickory bark, and deposited it in the chimney-corner. This fuel, when burned in the fire-place, gave forth a bright, cheerful light that rendered the use of candles quite unnecessary, and as it was already growing dark, some was placed on the fire at once. The reappearance of Cæsar made Denny feel much easier with regard to the horses, but he still eyed the fellow with distrust, and thought he would like to have the "bla'guard" under his thumb during the night.

The evening was spent in pleasant conversation. The travelers considered themselves very fortunate in falling in with this hospitable family, and could not be otherwise than in good spirits. Old Ephraim talked a great deal about past events, his memory being frequently refreshed by Grandmother Shelbridge, and sometimes by his wife, while Ruth sat demurely on one side of the fire-place, with her little hands clasped on her lap, gazing dreamily into the fire. Lauren Haldrick talked more than was his wont too. Many and stirring were the adventures he recounted of the Revolutionary War, which had just closed, and in which both he and Denny had taken an active part.

When it had grown so late that they all began to think of retiring, they were suddenly diverted from the thought by the barking of dogs outside. Then voices were heard, as if more than one person were approaching the house, and immediately after there came a loud rap on the door. There was something peculiar in the knock—something like a signal, as though the

author meant to communicate to the inmates more than a stranger would be capable of understanding. The women looked significantly at one another, while Ruth started and bit her lip. Haldrick thought he saw a cloud sweep over the face of Ephraim Shelbridge.

"Verily, 'tis Frondeau, the Frenchman," said the latter, gravely, as he rose and walked to the door. "I dare say that he and that ugly red-man have again stopped to pass the night with us."

"I wish it would please them to stay away," said his wife, in a low tone.

"Good-evening, friend Ephraim—how do you do?" cried a bluff, noisy voice, as the door opened. "Glad to see you—we are benighted, and want to stay with you till morning—come in, chief. By our lady! I never saw a darker night."

The speaker walked into the room while he was saying this. He was a big man, fully six feet in height, broad-chested and muscular. He was attired in a complete suit of buckskin, that fitted his well-proportioned form to perfection. His face was of a mold that might have been pronounced handsome, in spite of the crafty, fox-like expression that was ever predominant. His hair and mustache were black as a crow's wing, and unrestrained in their growth. The broad-brimmed hat jauntily set on his head, the glittering weapons displayed in his belt, and a certain bold, fierce air that seemed a part of the man, added not a little to his wild, semi-savage appearance. He carried his gun on one arm, with a sort of graceful hug common with French sportsmen; the hand grasping it by the lock, while the barrel reclined obliquely across the arm. His other hand held a cord, that was tied to the feet of a dead turkey, which was hung over his shoulder.

He was not alone. Another man came in behind him, like a faithful dog following his master. This was an Indian, and one of the ugliest of his race. He was a big burly fellow, who apparently possessed the strength of an ox in his brawny limbs, though a more uncouth, misshapen, and repulsive being it would not be easy to find. His face, which was naturally hideous, was not rendered less so by the black paint that was daubed upon it, nor were his features materially beautified by the brass ring in his nose, and the massive half-moons of the same metal that adorned his ears. His eyes glittered like those of some vicious animal, beneath his beetling brows, and indeed he seemed to require only a covering of hair to transform him into a genuine gorilla. Like his companion, he carried a gun and a variety of small-arms.

The white man handed the turkey to the negro, who filled up the kitchen door with her fat person.

"Here, Phillis, you may have the pleasure of getting up a turkey dinner to-morrow if you wish," he said, in his easy, careless way. "I shot the bird this afternoon— Ah! you have guests, I see?"

Haldrick thought his surprise was feigned, but no one else seemed to doubt its purity. The men were formally introduced by Ephraim, and then the white man, who was a French trader named Frondeau, shook hands with the women

of the family. Haldrick, who watched him like a hawk, saw him press Ruth's hand in a significant manner, and whisper something close to her ear. Then he saw her blush, tremble, and drop her eyes to the floor, while he turned away with a covert smile.

Was this man Ruth Shelbridge's lover? The thought did not exhilarate the young Virginian; we might almost say it tortured him. Why it was so, he would have been at a loss himself to explain. Surely, it was nothing to him who this Quaker girl did or did not love.

But this Frenchman—was he not a villain? An ordinary observer would pronounce him a wild lover of adventure, whose worst fault was his reckless daring; but the skilled reader of countenances would hardly let him off with that.

A chair was set for him in the circle, and a minute later he was carrying on the greater part of an animated conversation, proving himself to be an easy and graceful talker.

The Indian, disdaining the chair that was proffered him, sat down on the floor in front of the hearth, and amused himself by gazing steadfastly at the blazing bark, observing nothing that was going on around him, and apparently as senseless as a piece of stone. Haldrick eyed him with curiosity—Denny with infinite disgust. Noticing the expressions of both, the glib-tongued Frondeau explained to them that the Indian was a good-natured fellow, belonging to the Wea tribe, and was friendly to the whites. He was called Le Buffle by the French—a name suggested by his huge and ungainly proportions. It appeared that he and Frondeau were continually together; one was seldom seen without the other. They had been to the Quaker's house, and enjoyed his hospitality many times in the past year.

On the present occasion, as the trader asserted, they had come up the river from Post Vincennes, having proceeded thus far on a projected expedition to the Indian villages on the upper Wabash, whither they were determined to go in spite of all the rumors to the effect that hostilities were breaking out afresh between the white and red denizens all along the border.

There were two facts which the young Virginian was quick to observe. First, that the two visitors were by no means cordially received; second, that Frondeau aspired to the hand of the daughter. He observed these things with strange emotions, and when he went to bed, it was with a dim perception that a score of some kind already existed between him and the dashing adventurer, which could be settled only by a collision.

CHAPTER II.

THWARTED.

NOTWITHSTANDING he was fatigued by a day's ride through a trackless forest, Lauren Haldrick slept but little that night. A great many thoughts kept him awake, uppermost among which were those that were intimately connected with the two men who occupied the adjoining chambers. There were only two rooms in the second story of the house; one of these had been assigned to Haldrick and Denny, the other to Frondeau and Le Buffle.

Long after the family had retired, and while the Irishman was snoring loudly in blissful forgetfulness of all earthly cares, the young man lay awake, listening to the hum of voices in the next room, where the Indian and the Frenchman kept up an unflagging conversation until past midnight. The talking was done chiefly by the Frenchman, the savage confining himself to sententious replies, and hog-like grunts. What was said the listener could not understand, although his curiosity and suspicions twice led him to get up, and steal to the door to listen. Once, indeed, he heard the speaker say: "The fellow looks like he might have considerable money," but not another word was intelligible, and he inferred, from the nature of the remark, that it was merely some trading scheme under discussion.

All were up bright and early the next morning, and were down-stairs in time for breakfast. At the table the conversation ran on different subjects, prominent among which was Old Josh Lincoln, the scout of the Wabash. His cabin was not far away, and stood on the bank of the river. It was decided that Frondeau and Le Buffle should guide the travelers to the cabin, since it was their intention to return directly to the river. Their services were volunteered graciously, and accepted without hesitation. The travelers were also prevailed upon to leave their horses in Ephraim's stable, knowing as they did that this last remnant of their journey might easily be accomplished afoot, and having been assured by their new friends that Lincoln could offer them no such accommodations for their animals. Their kind host promised to take good care of the horses until they were called for.

After breakfast was over, Haldrick strolled out to the stable, partly to be alone with his thoughts for a few moments, and partly to see how the horses were faring. The young man entered the stable, and looked about with admiration at the comfortable interior. Having satisfied himself that all was well, he was about to leave the building and return to the house, when he heard a light footstep, and Ruth Shelbridge stood beside him, looking up earnestly into his face. Her cheeks were all aglow, her eyes beaming like stars, and her breath came and went with unusual quickness through her parted lips.

"My friend, I advise thee to be on thy guard," she said, laying her hand on his arm, and speaking rapidly. "Thy guides design thee no good. I heard them talking last night. They have an object in offering their services. 'Twill do no harm to watch them."

Before he could recover from his surprise sufficiently to speak, she had fluttered away, and was tripping along the path toward the house. He stood motionless, looking after her until she was out of sight, and then, after reflecting awhile on what she had said, he sauntered carelessly on her tracks, seeming as unconcerned as if his reverie had not been broken since leaving the breakfast-table.

A few minutes later the four men were ready to be off, and went through the formula of shaking every member of the family by the hand, as they prepared to start. Ruth stood apart from the group, and in taking leave of her, at a mo-

ment when the eyes of all the rest were distracted, Haldrick took the opportunity to whisper:

"Thanks—your warning shall be heeded."

The next moment Frondeau was gallantly bending his handsome form before the girl, till his lips touched the tips of her taper fingers. Haldrick saw her turn her face away, with a slight shudder, and observed that she was pale and red by turns.

The leave-taking over, the adventurers shouldered their guns and went their way. Across the clearing, down to the margin of the woods, in among the shadows of the trees, and out of sight.

Once within the maze of the forest, the party struck into a sinuous and almost imperceptible path, leading in a westerly direction. The Indian, Le Buffle, as by common consent, took the lead. In spite of his huge, unshapely form, he proved quite nimble-footed, and as well educated in the different branches of wood-craft as any of his race. One less experienced in the art would have been puzzled by the track he was following; he glided along its course with the assurance of a bloodhound. He said nothing himself, and appeared to hear nothing that was said by others. He could not have noticed his companions less had he been unconscious of their presence.

Frondeau, on the contrary, talked and laughed continuously, and appeared in the best of spirits. Affecting to observe nothing of the grave distrust and scorn with which he was regarded by Haldrick, he wagged his tongue with unembarrassed freedom, lining his discourse with pleasantries, and appearing to entertain no thought that was not forced out by an overflow of unequivocal good-nature. But a timely warning had placed Lauren on his guard, and he listened coldly to the weightless prattle that was intended to deceive him. He understood that dark and villainous designs were masked by this levity.

The party soon reached the Wabash. As they emerged from the shadows of the forest, and stood upon the bank of the broad stream, Frondeau cut short his *persiflage* in the middle of a sentence, and turning to the young Virginian, said:

"This is the Wabash, my friend. We have not been long coming—indeed, not long enough. It is pleasant walking in such company, and I regret that we must part so soon."

Le Buffle stepped aside and shot a furtive glance at the Frenchman, while Haldrick and Denny looked up and down the river as if in search of something. Nothing was visible, except the flowing water, the thickly-wooded shores, and the wild birds soaring across the open space. No human habitation was here to be seen.

The travelers looked inquiringly at their guide.

"Ah! I comprehend!" said the trader, with a smile. "You expected to see the cabin of old Josh Lincoln as soon as we should arrive at the river?"

"You volunteered to guide us to his house, if I mistake not," returned Haldrick, almost severely.

"Divil a shanty iv any kind do I see here," asserted Denny.

"And yet there is one not far away," said Frondeau, quietly. "Josh's cabin is about a half-mile down the river, and can't be missed if you follow the stream in that direction. This is the point where the chief and I left our canoe. It is hid in those bushes that overhang the water. It would have been out of our way to take you directly to your uncle's house, and as time is precious with us, we thought it would be as well to bring you here, and let the stream guide you the rest of the distance."

Haldrick looked steadily at him without replying. He colored a little, bit his lip, and at once became busily employed in priming his gun afresh.

"Hillo!" suddenly exclaimed Denny. "Phat w'u'd yeez be afther callin' that thing comin' yandher, I dunno? It's a boat, sure, and divil an Irish lad am I av there be'n't a couple iv rid nagurs settin' in it, too."

Such an observation was sure to draw the attention of the rest of the party. The speaker's gaze was directed across the river, and turning their eyes in that direction they all saw a canoe on the water, heading toward them. It had just put out from the opposite bank, and was occupied by two Indians, in the barbarous dress of their race.

"*Mon Dieu!* they are savages," exclaimed the Frenchman, with some show of alarm. "Look to your weapons, comrades. They are coming this way, and evidently intend to land near this point."

"Do you think they are enemies?" asked Haldrick, doubtfully.

"They are savages," repeated the Frenchman, with confirmatory stress. "In this country, my friend, it is policy to regard every man, white or red, as an enemy, until you receive convincing proof to the contrary."

"I am not so ignorant as you seem to imagine," said Haldrick, quietly. "These Indians are either peaceably inclined, or very imprudent. We are standing in plain view. They can see that we outnumber them two to one, and that they would have no chance for their lives in a fight with us. See; they are already in rifle-range; we could easily pick them off from here, and yet they approach boldly, without the slightest exhibition of fear or hostile feeling. I have had some experience in Indian warfare, and never knew them to make an attack in this manner."

"There is wisdom in your words, I am fain to acknowledge," returned the Frenchman, politely; then, with a smile of singular import lurking about his mouth, he turned to his red *confreere*:

"What say you, chief?"

"White brudder right," grunted Le Buffle. "Dem friendly Injuns. Look—see for 'self—Frondeau know 'em."

The trader bent forward and appeared to look closely at the occupants of the canoe. Then he uttered a short laugh.

"They are a couple of our friends from up the river, as true as I live!" he said. "They have recognized us, and are coming over to meet us."

"Be jabers! d'ye see that ugly spalpeen standin' up forninst the bow, makin' signs?"

muttered Denny. "Sure, I'd like to plug the mug iv him, jist to see whether he'd dhrap inside iv the boat or not."

One of the savages had risen to his feet, as if to show himself to those on shore. After making a few signs with his hands, indicating a desire for peace, he sat down again.

Instead of watching the new-comers, as the rest were doing, Haldrick kept a distrustful eye on Frondeau. Twice he thought some furtive communication passed between him and Le Buffle, and he saw both carefully examine the priming of their guns.

The canoe touched the bank, and the Indians jumped out. Their feet were no sooner on *terra firma* than Frondeau and Le Buffle, with the quickness of lightning, turned upon our two travelers, and leveled their guns in a manner that seemed to foretell murder.

But they were not quick enough to catch the Virginian napping. His rifle was at his shoulder as soon as Frondeau's, and as he glanced through the sights he cried out in a clear, calm voice:

"Stop, villain! Put down your gun, or this bullet shall find your heart. Don't flatter yourself that you have taken me by surprise!"

Frondeau was somewhat disconcerted on finding that he had been anticipated by the young man, but instead of heeding the mandate, he flung back a taunting reply.

"You had better examine your gun before you attempt to discharge it," he said. "The load was drawn last night while you slept. Ha, ha! Send a bullet to my heart, if you can!"

Haldrick lowered the weapon, and saw to his dismay that the villain had spoken the truth.

It was empty!

"Lay down your arms!" commanded the trader. "We don't want to harm you, but if you offer the least resistance you're a dead dog. We know you've got money—"

Haldrick waited to hear no more. He saw that Denny and Le Buffle had grappled, and were struggling desperately. He saw also that the other two Indians had drawn their canoe up on the land, and were bounding up the slope to take part in the conflict. All this he took in at one quick glance, and then, dropping his own rifle, he made a spring and seized that of his adversary.

Both were strong men, and a fierce contest of muscular power would undoubtedly have followed; but, at that instant, the keen report of a rifle reverberated through the forest, and an unearthly death-shriek came close in its wake. Each retained his gripe on the gun, but both turned as of one accord to seek an explanation of the shot. To their mutual surprise they saw one of the savages down on the ground, writhing in mortal pain. The other had stopped near him, and was a picture of horrified consternation.

As they looked they beheld a lithe form dart into view, and rush upon the remaining Indian. A clubbed rifle clove the air, and descended upon the shaven crown of the stupefied wretch, who sunk to the ground with a deep groan.

Then the form came nearer. Its left hand

dragged the empty gun; its right was closed firmly on the butt of a pistol, which was aimed at the breast of the French trader.

"Go!" cried a female voice; "go quick, or Wistah will shoot! Look, Frondeau—you know Wistah! She hates the white fox! She will kill him! Run, or you can't escape!"

The dark muzzle of the pistol covered the craven's heart, and a tiny finger already touched the trigger. The color faded from his face, and for a moment he seemed unable to speak or move. Le Buffle, who would soon have had Denny completely in his power, now flung the latter out of his way, and both he and the Irishman stared at the apparition in dumb amazement.

For a single moment Frondeau was transfixed to the spot. Then, with a horrible curse, he turned and plunged into the dense undergrowth, carrying his gun, which Haldrick had voluntarily released. Le Buffle made haste to follow, pouring forth a howl of baffled rage as the tall bushes closed behind his burly form.

Haldrick and Denny were too much amazed by what had occurred, to go into ecstasies over the precipitate retreat of their enemies. They stood still, glancing alternately at their rescuer and the point where the two villains had disappeared.

The person who had rendered them so invaluable a service was a girl—a mere child, we may say—slight of figure, and not more than fourteen years of age. Her dress was semi-savage in its character, consisting of a neat-fitting tunic, embroidered with parti-colored needle-work, with a skirt fancifully fringed and reaching just to her knees—leggings of dressed deer-skin, little moccasins of the same material, and a scarlet mantle drooping from her shoulders behind. Her hair, which was black as an Indian's, but soft as silk, fell about her shoulders in a shower of ringlets, and was adorned by one or two eagle-feathers. Her eyes were large, lustrous, and burning in their gaze. Sometimes they were meek and gentle in their expression; again they flashed and blazed, as if governed by some wild passion; at other times they glowed with a strange, uncertain light, suggestive of a weakened mind.

The girl was straight, lithe, and active as a squirrel. Her features were of the European cast, but there was a tinge in her complexion that might have been imparted by a mixture of blood. She was decidedly pretty, with a voice as musical as silvery chimes, and teeth that glistened like genuine pearls.

In a belt that encircled her waist, she carried knives and pistols, and a small hatchet. Her rifle was a light, short-barreled, silver-mounted piece; a model of exquisite workmanship, well suited to the hands that carried it.

But that which astonished the beholders most was a huge rattlesnake, coiled twice around the white neck of the girl, and lifting its ugly head on a level with her own, while it hissed virulently, and darted its red tongue at the two men. She seemed as unmindful of its presence as if that were its customary resting-place—which it undoubtedly was.

The strange creature put up the pistol, with which she had threatened the Frenchman's life,

and returned the curious glances that were bestowed upon her.

"Who are you?" demanded Haldrick, as soon as he found his voice.

"Wistah," replied the little maiden, with the utmost composure.

"Wistah?" repeated the young man, slowly.

"'Tis a queer name—almost as queer as the person who bears it."

"The red-men call me that," explained the girl. "White men call me the Child Spy."

Denny and Haldrick exchanged glances. The name implied a character of considerable importance. Could the child be speaking the truth, or was she crazy? Did she really serve in the capacity of spy among the Indians? or was she some wild being whom nobody knew, and who lived in the woods?

"Where is your home?" asked our hero.

A burst of laughter rippled from the maiden's lips.

"Did you hear that question, Demon?" she exclaimed, addressing the rattlesnake, as she held it by the neck and looked down into its face.

"Where is our home, Demon? Ha! ha! ha! Where is the home of the wind, that whispers in Wistah's ear from morning till night? In the wide forest, on the broad river, and among the hills and valleys. *There* is our home!" She looked up at the men, and added quickly—while a new expression came over her glowing face—

"White men from the East, take Wistah's warning: beware of Frondeau and Le Buffle. They would rob and murder you. Ha! ha! ha! Good-by. Careful, Demon! Be loving, but don't strangle me. Good-by."

"Stop, girl!—stop a moment!" called Haldrick.

But the strange creature only waved her hand, and the next instant she was gone; leaving the two men staring blankly at each other, and at the dead Indians stretched out upon the ground.

CHAPTER III.

THE OLD SCOUT OF THE WABASH.

"HERE, Moses; down, you rascal! Dod cuss yer hidel whar did you git yer raisin'? Didn't yer ever see a white man 'fore now?"

The speaker was an odd specimen of the American backwoodsman; tall, lank, and loose-jointed, with a leathery face and gray hair, and eyes that gleamed with piercing brightness under a pair of frosty brows. He was standing in the open door of a log cabin, that had been erected on the summit of a bold bluff, overlooking the Wabash.

His words were addressed to a huge dog, that had suddenly left his side, and bounded down toward the edge of the woods with a series of sharp yelps. The stern reproof of his master cooled the impetuosity of the brute, and he came trotting back in sullen silence, glancing over his shoulder in a cross, menacing way, that seemed to tell the strangers they could thank their lucky stars for the timely interference.

Two men had come into view, and were approaching the cabin. They were whites, and carried guns, and supposing them to be a couple of hunters, or scouts, from the settlement below,

the old backwoodsman stepped from his door to meet them.

"Good-morning, sir," cried one of them, in a cheery voice. "I believe you are the man whom people call Old Josh Lincoln?"

"Them's the colors I'm sailin' under, stranger," was the good-natured reply, "but I'll swap my scalp fur a piece of crow-meat, ef I kin git over your handle without a lift. Yer face looks familiar-like, and now that I look clus' I'll sw'ar I've seen it 'fore now; but my mem'ry ain't nothin' to brag on any more."

"Did you ever know any one named Haldrick?"

"Lord bless you! I reckon I *did*," he exclaimed, in surprise, drawing back to gaze at his interrogator. "And skin me ef you ain't one of 'em," he added, as the expression of his countenance became one of absolute astonishment. "You're the boy! Yer name's Lauren! I mought 'a' knowed it, 'cause you're the very picter of yer daddy. Give me yer paw, youngster. I'm powerful glad to see you."

The old pioneer seemed nearly overcome with mingled surprise and joy. He grasped the young man's hand, and shook it so heartily that the latter cried out with pain; then he seized him by the shoulder, whirled him around, and viewed him from head to foot, as he ejaculated:

"In the name of all that's glorious, what brought *you* out hyur in this heathen kentry? I never dreamed of seein' you or any of yer fam'ly ag'in on this 'arth. Reckon yer don't b'long to any of them kump'nies what do sich tall spec'latin' in land round these parts? Ain't prospectin', or surveyin', or any thing of that sort? It's been nigh sixteen years since I see'd you. What brought you, boy? and who's this chap with you?"

"This is my friend, Michael Denny," replied our hero, as soon as he was given an opportunity to speak. "We fought together through the war, and he wanted to accompany me as a sort of serving man, declaring he would fight for me to the death."

"And av yeeze don't b'lave a wurrid iv that statement sure, I'm willin' to be put to the test," put in Denny, with emphasis.

"I came out here to hunt you up," continued Haldrick, to his uncle. "Since the close of the war, I have found it impossible to be contented with quiet life at the old homestead, and as you are my nearest living relative—"

"What! yer daddy ain't dead?"

"My father died within the past year. You remember better than I when my mother died, and you are aware that I was the only fruit of their union. Being left alone in the world, with nothing but fond memories to make my home the dearest spot on earth, I resolved to emigrate, and here I am. I came to find you, and to settle in this region if I am pleased with it."

The old borderer indulged in a quiet laugh.

"Wal, boy, thar's a heap of good huntin' hyurabouts, and a right smart of excitement to be found 'thout lookin' fur it, but I'm afeard that you'll find it a mighty rough sort of a life, arter all. I'm powerful glad you've kum, and I hope you'll stay, but I reckon you'll soon git tired of it. This is my cabin; it's been my hum fur several yearn. 'Tain't of much size, I al-

low, but ef you make up yer mind to stay, we'll t'ar it down and build a bigger one. Which way did you kum?"

"We came down the Ohio River to the mouth of the Miami, and from that point took a straight cut across the country."

"You mought 'a' kum all the way to Vincennes by water."

"True; but we were told that the route by land was much the shorter, and at present beset by fewer dangers."

"Foot it all the way?"

"No; we are provided with good horses. They are now enjoying good lodging and much-needed rest in the stable of a Quaker family, whose domicile we happened upon last evening."

Thereupon Haldrick related all that had taken place since the previous evening; how Frondeau and his Indian companion had come to the house of Ephraim Shelbridge, while he and Denny were there; how the villains had shown their true characters on the river-bank, and would probably have murdered himself and the Irishman, but for the timely appearance of a little girl with a rattlesnake around her neck, who killed two savages and drove the others off.

At this point in the narrative, old Josh Lincoln turned upon the narrator with beaming eyes.

"Did the gal do that?" he demanded, quickly.

"Yes," was the reply.

"Did she try to wipe the Frenchman out?"

"No, but she frightened him almost out of his wits. I never saw such cowardice. But he and Le Buffle ran for their lives, when she confronted them. Did you ever see her?"

"See her!" exclaimed the scout, in surprise.

"Lord bless you—"

He seemed to recollect something and checked himself. Then, with a carelessness that was plainly assumed, he added:

"That 'ar cuss what calls hisself Frondeau ar' a reg'lar sneak. He pertends to trade with the Injuns, and I reckon he does do sunkthin' in that line, but ef he don't steal a right smart from the whites I'm powerfully mistook. The reds are wuss this year than they have been since General Clark circ'lated in these parts; and thar's some reports that this skunk has been seen with 'em on one or two 'casions, when they attacked the homes of solitary settlers."

"How? A renegade?"

"That's what I think. Maybe I am wrong, but 'tain't often I am, in matters of this sort. Guess them Frenchers down in Vincennes don't s'picion nothin' or they'd have somebody watchin' the cuss. He goes down thar every once in awhile, and wharever he's seen, that ugly imp, Le Buffle, will be found luggin' arter him. Le Buffle is a chief, belongin' to the Wea tribe. Frondeau tells that he was converted to the Christian faith by one of them 'ar French missionaries, and deserted his people to live with the pale-faces; but I'll hear some one else tell that 'fore I b'lieve it. I don't think the Injun has deserted his people. It's one of Frondeau's lies. They're both enemies to the whites, and I opine they're doin' all they kin to make the red-skins break their treaties, and dig up the hatchet ag'in' us. Dod cuss thar hides! Josh

Linkin 'll show 'em a thing or two, ef they ain't keerful."

The scout ground his teeth and struck the earth smartly with the butt of his gun.

"But they ain't no use stan'in' hyur all day," he said, breaking off abruptly. "Let's go into the house."

And into the house they went. Josh Lincoln's cabin was a substantial, but by no means a commodious affair; being amply large enough for the accommodation and comfort of himself, with but little to spare. It had originally contained only one room, and might be said to contain only one now; but a cord had been stretched across it, about as high as a man's head, and from this was suspended a number of bear-skins, forming a partition that effectually concealed the rear part.

In the front or main compartment was a couple of stools, a table and a fire-place. The backwoodsman told his guests to make themselves at home, and then—while Denny amused himself by playing with the dog—he and his nephew enjoyed a long conversation about the late war, the growth of the country, the death of Haldrick's father, the disposal of the estate and various other topics. The old man was delighted to find he had so intelligent a nephew, and one who had done such good service in the Revolution; and as he rose to prepare dinner he gave the youth a jovial slap on the shoulder, while he said:

"Lauren, my boy, I'd skeerce expect a single chap, with your brains and good looks, to kum 'way out hyur to live. Ef yer has any notion of gettin' spliced, you'd orter done it 'fore leavin' the kentry whar purty females ar' plenty. Thar ain't but one in these parts, as I knows on, that 'u'd be fit fur you to shine up to."

"Only one?" laughed Haldrick. "To whom do you refer?"

"Eph Shelbridge's gal; her as they call Ruth."

Haldrick reddened, in spite of his efforts to appear unconcerned.

"You've see'd her, youngster; what d'yer think of her?"

"Well," drawled the young man, as if the thought of forming an opinion of her had occurred to him for the first time, "I think she is pretty, pleasing, prudent and—pure."

"Plump as a partridge, purty as a pink, and posted up like a pupil," said the scout, continuing the alliteration. "She's a spankin' nice critter; no two ways 'bout it. I think a heap of that gal, and now that I cogitate on't, I do kinder wish you and her 'u'd take a like to each other—rip my shirt ef I don't."

"If I am not deceived by appearances," returned our hero, "the Frenchman has designs in that direction."

"Yas; I've knowed that fur quite a spell, but he's got 'bout the same chance of winnin' as a b'ar has of crawlin' through a two-inch knot-hole. The gal don't like him, and ef I ain't mistook the hull fam'ly's sot ag'in' him, though he tries to make his p'int by bein' mighty friendly to 'arst 'em. I opine it won't be long 'fore the blamed cuss 'll bring trouble onto them 'ar Quakers."

Old Josh Lincoln and his two guests, together

with his dog, Moses, spent a part of the afternoon hunting ducks along the river. It was vast sport for Haldrick and Denny, who learned much from the old scout that they had never known, concerning the best modes of hunting aquatic game.

That evening a sumptuous repast was served in the hunter's cabin, consisting chiefly of roast duck; and when the hungry sportsmen had appetites, they courted the soothing influence of their pipes. Josh spun yarns while he smoked, and made the time pass very agreeably by recounting some of the wonderful adventures that had befallen him in the performance of his dangerous duties as scout and ranger in the Indian country.

When it came time to retire, the old man told his guests they were to sleep behind the bear-skin curtain, and showed them to their respective cots. As for himself, he would spread his blanket before the hearth, and rest as sweetly there as a prince in his royal home.

Our travelers were surprised to find that the space behind the curtain was divided into two small apartments, by another partition of skins, and that each apartment contained a couch of furs. Both had been used recently, and, in the one assigned to him, Haldrick found a pair of small moccasins that had evidently been worn by a child. On the wall above the couch hung an Indian bow, short and light with a quiver of uniform size, beautifully ornamented and filled with arrows. How was this to be explained? He had understood that his uncle lived alone, and here was evidence to the contrary.

But he said nothing.

CHAPTER IV.

THE RAVAGED HOME.

How long he slumbered Haldrick had no means of knowing. One of the sweetest dreams that had ever visited his pillow, was broken by the fierce barking of a dog outside of the house.

He was but partially aroused by the noise, and as it did not continue for the space of a minute, he was scarcely sensible of his awakening before he had again sunk into a deep sleep, and was once more in oblivion.

This time he could not have slept more than a very few minutes, when his rest was again disturbed by something very like human voices. The sound was low, and at first mingled itself with his dreams; but as it continued, it grew more and more distinct, and he gradually became conscious that two or more persons were in close conversation near him. He was wide awake in a moment, and lay still to listen. One was a female voice; the other was that of a man. Both were talking earnestly—almost excitedly. He knew at once that the man was his uncle, but although there was something strangely familiar in the sound of the other voice, he concluded he had never heard it before.

He lifted his head, the better to hear, and discovered that there was a bright light in the outer apartment. He saw it shining over the top of the curtain, and saw two huge shadows in the

shape of human heads, on the wall. Being now fully convinced that he was not dreaming, he rose cautiously from the couch and parted the bear-skins, just enough to look through.

The room was lighted by a single torch, which revealed both of the speakers. Old Josh Lincoln had risen from his blanket, which was still spread out on the floor, and, rifle in hand, was a picture of profound astonishment and indignation. Haldrick's gaze fell upon the other person. It was a girl—a child—wild-looking, but pretty, who carried a handsome little rifle in her hand, and a hideous rattlesnake around her neck. He recognized her as his friend of the morning: the strange being who had rendered Denny and himself so invaluable a service, by thwarting the treacherous designs of the Frenchman and his ally.

"Sure they meant to do that job to-night?" he heard his uncle ask; and the wild girl replied:

"Wistah is sure. She followed them to their den, and heard their council. Didn't we, Demon? Ha! ha! We heard every word of it—Demon and I. We saw them dance the war-dance, and waited until they started."

"Waited till they started!" exclaimed the scout. "They must have did thar work 'fore this time, then."

"No. They went by land; Wistah came by water. She came down the river—fast, fast, fast!"

"In yer canoe?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Ask Demon."

"But you've been 'yur a spell. It's long arter midnight. The imps'll have to perform thar parts purty soon, or they won't have the dark on thar side. You say we must go and tell the Quakers as how the reds is goin' to kum down on 'em. I'm afeard we'll be too late, but we'll streak it 'thout losin' more time—"

"Did you say the Quakers? Are *they* in danger?" exclaimed Haldrick, forgetting himself at once and stepping forward into the presence of the speakers. "What does this mean, uncle? Why is this girl here, and what are you talking about?"

"I thought you's asleep, youngster," said Josh, with a smile.

"Your voices awoke me. I heard a part of your conversation. What is it, uncle? Are the Indians on the war-path to-night?"

"It's them blamed skunks, Frondeau and Le Buffle," returned the backwoodsman. "This gal follered 'em, arter she left you this mornin', and found thar den."

"Their den!"

"It's a cave, consid'able distance up the river. We never knowed 'twar thar, but we had our s'picious. Wistah's been playin' spy, and she's l'arnt a heap. This Frencher, instid of bein' only a trader, is the leader of a band of Injuns, numberin' no less than fifty braves, and that 'ar band ar' the very one what's doin' all the mischief of late. They keep shady while the sun shines, but of nights they kum out of thar den and make a raid on the cabin of some solitary settler, leavin' the credit of the deed to one of the peaceable tribes. Plunder and skulps is the object. To-night—"

"To-night?" repeated Haldrick, breathlessly.

"To-night," continued the hunter, "has been set apart fur a little game with Eph Shelbridge and his family."

"To murder them?"

"To ransack tha'r house."

"And leave the inmates unharmed?"

"Reds is reds, youngster, wharever they be, and you may go yer hull pile that they'll either kill or captur' the poor Quakers. Frondeau won't hold 'em off. He couldn't ef he would. They want blood; he wants the gal. Them two devils war thar last night to see how the land laid. They told you they had just kum up from Vincennes, but that war all sham. They see'd you and Irish stop at Eph's house, and they made up tha'r minds that you had some yaller-boys about yer pusson. Two Injuns war with 'em at that time, but they sent 'em back to the river, with instructions how to act in the mornin'."

"Who told you this?"

"Wistah. She's been watchin' 'em like a hawk. She's sharper nor a steel-trap, young as she is, and whatever she tells you 'bout matters of this sort may be depended on—"

"Hark!" suddenly cried the girl, dropping the head of the serpent, which she had been caressing. "Did you hear it?"

"Hear what?" asked both men in a breath.

"A shot—a gun-shot. It sounded far away. Wistah's ears never deceive her. The devils have begun their work!"

With tightly-compressed lips, Josh Lincoln strode to the door and jerked it open in haste. Haldrick and the girl followed, and all stood in the doorway gazing anxiously out upon the gloomy waste. The night was dark and still as death. The forest was like an impenetrable shroud, and not a star twinkled in the unbroken blackness above. It was the night of all nights for the perpetration of hellish crimes.

All at once a faint report came to the listening ears; a report like that caused by the discharge of a rifle. It was scarcely audible, yet too plain to be mistaken. Then came another, precisely like the first; and a moment later a distant chorus of yells rose on the still air, undoubtedly emanating from savage throats.

"Too late!" muttered the scout, with a sorrowful shake of his head. "It's all up with them poor critters; Lord help 'em!"

A hand gripped his arm like a vise.

"Do you think it so bad as that?" demanded a husky voice. "Do you read so horrible a tale in those sounds?"

"They don't mean anything good, youngster; that you kin sw'ar to."

"But do they come from Ephraim's clearing? Remember that is fully two miles distant."

"I've heern the crack of a rifle furdern that, on a still night like this," asserted Josh, quietly. "Sound travels a long ways, when thar ain't no other noise to stop it. Yas, my boy, they kum from the clearin', and no mistake; and skin me ef thar ain't some bad work goin' on thar at this pertickler time."

"Do you think the Indians will kill them?"

"Mayhap."

"Ruth, and all?"

Before Josh could reply, the attention of both was drawn to the wild girl, who uttered a sud-

den exclamation and pointed out through the darkness.

"Look! look!" she cried.

That quarter of the heavens over the Quaker's clearing was bathed in a bright, red light. When first noticed it was barely visible, but it rapidly grew in breadth and brilliance till the murky clouds seemed transformed into a sea of fire.

The triumphant whoops of the savage marauders could now be heard more plainly than before.

"My God! the house is already in flames," cried Haldrick, as the color faded from his cheeks.

"They're makin' short work of *that* job," said his uncle, calmly. "I'm afeard it's all up with Eph and the wimmin. Poor feller! I told him more'n once't what a mistake he made in the buildin' of that 'ar house, but I never could make him b'lieve it."

"Surely, this white man can not be fiendish enough to let his followers put the women to death, even if he permits them to murder Ephraim in cold blood," said Haldrick.

"He's fiendish enough to do it hisself, fur a few hundred dollars," replied Josh. "But you may bet all yer shiners be ain't goin' to harm the young 'un, nor let anybody else harm her. He thinks she'd make a mighty good squaw, and I reckon he's about right thar."

"By heavens! she shall never be his."

"Eh?"

It would not be easy to describe the expression that appeared on the leathery visage of the scout at this declaration, but there was something so droll and comical in it that our hero felt the hot blood rush to the roots of his hair. He was about to stammer out something, when he was relieved by Wistah, who broke in with the exclamation:

"Come; let us go! Demon is impatient to be off."

"Go whar?" asked the scout.

"To the clearing—to the burning lodge. It is late, but we may do good even yet."

"Shall we go?" eagerly asked Haldrick, of his uncle.

"Sart'in," was the prompt rejoinder. "Go wake Irish, and let's be off. We won't git thar 'fore the Injuns cut sticks, I reckon, but maybe we kin find out whether our friends are killed or captur'd. Ef they're killed, hyur's what ar' goin' to have the bloodiest sort of revenge, ef it takes the rest of my life to get it!"

"And if captured?"

"We'll save 'em, or kick the bucket."

"Good!" cried Wistah. "Good! good! Ha, ha, ha! We'll save them, and kill their enemies."

Haldrick darted back into the house, hastily donned his coat, boots and cap, and secured his arms and ammunition. Then he aroused the Irishman, after several futile attempts, and hurriedly told him what had occurred. Denny was little more than half awake when he arose, and wondered how it could possibly concern him if all the houses in the country should burn down; but he made his preparations to accompany his companions as quickly as his somnolent condition would permit, and soon made his appear-

ance dragging his gun and looking very much bewildered.

"It's the Quaker family, is ud?" he asked, drowsily.

"Yes; they are attacked and probably massacred by Indians."

"Thin good-by to our horses, Haldrick, me b'y."

Haldrick's mind had been so intent on things of major importance, that he had not once thought of the loss he sustained in valuable horse-flesh.

"Yes," he replied, "I suppose we have looked upon our animals for the last time, but you are selish to think of that when human lives are sacrificed, or placed in imminent danger. All ready, uncle? Let us start at once."

The torch was extinguished, and all left the cabin. Josh secured the door and windows, and after satisfying himself that all was well in and around the house, he called Moses, and announced himself in readiness to be off.

The lurid glare still hung in the sky, and occasionally a few sparks could be seen soaring upward amid the waves of light; but the yells of the Indians were no longer heard. A silence like that of the tomb brooded over all.

Turning their faces toward the light of the fire, and allowing it to serve as a guide, the party set out fearlessly through the gloomy forest. Obedient to his master's orders, the dog followed behind; but the wild girl, who consulted the wishes of nobody, glided along several paces in advance of the men. She made hardly a sound as she moved through the clustering undergrowth, and it would have been extremely difficult to follow her by the noise she made. But she purposely remained in sight, and the Old Scout of the Wabash went implicitly whither she led.

"In the name of Heaven, who is this strange child?" inquired Haldrick of his uncle, as they pushed forward in the footsteps of the mysterious prodigy.

"She's the most wonderful critter, I reckon, that ever lived," was the emphatic response. "I sw'ar, by mighty! I sometimes have my doubts 'bout her bein' mortal. Thar's times when she don't act a bit like a critter of this world. Why, bless you, boy, she's skeercely fourteen year old, and thar ain't a sharper scout or Injun-fighter on the whole frontier!"

"A remarkable creature, truly. But who is she?"

"They call her Wistah, the Child Spy."

"Has she no other name?"

"None as I ever heern."

"But she has white blood in her veins?"

"Half-breed, I calc'late. Leastwise she's got a white face and finer ha'r than any red-skin I ever run afoul of."

"Where did she come from?"

"Her history ain't known hyurabouts, 'cept that she used to live 'mong the Injuns. I s'pose she war born among 'em. What she left 'em fur is cl'ar ahead of my tell, but I know she's been heavin' dirt in thar eyes fur up'ards of a year, and they don't know whar it kums from. Eight months ago she saved 'one of the forts down on the Ohio from bein' destroyed by the imps. She put the commandant on his guard

a few hours 'fore the time app'inted fur the s'prise, and the Injuns, findin' out as how the whites war ready to meet 'em, never made the attack. Fur that very deed some of the fellers at the fort gave her that little rifle she carries. Since then, she has saved several lives, one way and another. She warns scoutin' parties when they're runnin' into danger, and sometimes when the reds are 'bout to fall onto a band of pale-face hunters in the woods at night, she kums as silent as a spirrit, rouses the camp, and gives the men a chance to retreat or defend thar-selves. The Injuns hain't found out that she's workin' squar' ag'in' thar cause, and she goes among 'em 'thout the least bit of fear, ketchin' thar plans and layin' 'em before the whites. Fur that reason she kum to be called the Child Spy."

"Poor thing!" muttered the young man. "Tis a pity she's crazy."

"Crazy the devil!" growled Josh. "She's no more crazy than you or I be. Some folks sw'ar she's a witch, 'cause she acts a bit strange, and carries that pet rattlesnake wharever she goes."

"Does she live with you, uncle?"

"Eh? What put that into yer head?"

"I saw a small Indian bow, and a tiny pair of moccasins, in the apartment where I slept. It did not occur to me untill this minute that they might belong to Wistah."

"You've guessed right, youngster, though 'tain't ginerally known that me and the gal lives together," said Josh, after a moment's pause. "Somehow or other me and Wistah tuck a like to each other the fu'st time we met, and now she sorter makes her hum in my lodge. She ain't thar very often, but she calls it her hum fur all that. We keep it a secret, fur reasons of our own, but thar's no use tryin' to keep it from you bein's you're goin' to live with us. I think as much of that child as I do of my own life, and I'd defend her with the last ounce of strength in my body."

"She and Frondeau seem to be sworn enemies?"

"Frondeau! She hates the ground he walks on. I never could find out the cause on't, but they've been at swords' p'int's ever since I knowed 'em, and she sw'ars that her band 'll finally take his life. He's afeard on her, too. He mought stand up a dozen men, but he'd run like a deer as soon as she showed herself. She don't seem to be in a hurry to pop him over, howsum-ever, fur I've see'd her let several chances go by."

The hunter, who had talked more than was his wont, now relapsed into a thoughtful mood, and the party plodded on in silence.

CHAPTER V.

DEER FOOT, THE PIANKASHAW.

MOVING through brambles and brushwood, over fallen trees and purling streams, they finally reached the clearing. To their surprise they found that the Quaker's dwelling was not in flames, as they had been led to suppose, but was apparently in as good a condition as it had ever been. All the out-buildings, however, were burned to the ground, and from these had proceeded the light which our friends had witnessed from the bank of the Wabash.

The clearing was approached slowly, and with due circumspection. No sounds were heard, and it was believed that the Indians had withdrawn from the scene of their atrocity; but, in this the party recognized no reason why it should not be cautious in its movements. Led by Josh Lincoln and the wild girl, they were soon ensconced in a sheltered place, from which they had a full view of the clearing.

It was seemingly deserted. The house was dark and still, and to all appearance unharmed. The barn and other out-buildings were entirely destroyed by fire, but were still burning sufficiently to throw a dim light over the scene, and render objects visible in any part of the clearing. Patches of light touched the silent trees that bordered the open space.

"Divil take the bla'guards," growled Denny, looking toward the fire. "They've stolen our horses, or burnt 'em alive, sure."

"Hist!" cautioned the scout, gripping the Irishman's arm.

"Phat's the matter, I dunno?"

"Be still; do d' cuss yer hide!"

The Irishman had risen to his feet. Josh pulled him down in a manner more expeditious than gentle, and commanded him in a low tone to be silent. Denny was awed into obedience, and stared blankly at the old scout, while the Child Spy crept close to her friend's side, and whispered:

"What does Lincoln see?"

"Look fur yerself, little 'un," was the quiet reply. "Hyur's what 'ud call it an Injun."

Lincoln was looking keenly toward the dwelling. All eyes followed the course of his gaze, and beheld a dark form moving about near the house. Wistah's black eyes flashed, and closing her lips tightly over her clinched teeth, she slowly drew up her rifle, and held it with both hands in front of her.

The form flitted like a shadow, and all agreed in pronouncing it an Indian. It appeared and disappeared several times, and then, to the surprise of the watchers, it suddenly glided away from the house, and came directly toward the spot where they were 'ying in concealment.

As he came nearer, the light from the burning buildings fell upon him, and showed him to be what they had from the first supposed—a savage in his war-paint. In his arms he carried a bundle, to which he clung as if it were something valuable; probably the fruits of his own individual search, after his satisfied brethren had departed.

All was still, and the unsuspecting wretch rapidly approached, carrying his burden with evident ease, although it appeared quite bulky.

Now he reached the edge of the woods, and began to move more slowly. The anxious whites crouching motionless in the bushes, saw his dark form and glittering orbs, as he commenced to make his way through the tangled under-wood, and hushed the sound of their breathing to let him pass. He was so close that Josh could have touched him by reaching out his hand, when Moses half rose from his cowering position, and gave vent to a deep growl. Quick as lightning Josh struck him smartly on the nose, and effectually silenced him; but the act came too late.

With a guttural exclamation the Indian halted abruptly, and peered into the bushes where the party was concealed.

The old scout saw that they could not escape discovery, and his plans were taken in an instant. Jumping up with startling celerity, he clutched the Indian's throat before the latter could utter a sound, and bent him backward like a whale-bone.

There was a gleam of steel in the darkness, accompanied by a dull sound of stabbing; then a faint moan was heard, and a heavy body fell with a crash upon a pile of dry brushwood. After a moment's silence the voice of old Josh Lincoln was heard to remark:

"Thar's one red done fur."

Wistah sprung forward, followed by Haldrick and Denny.

There stood Josh, leaning on his rifle and looking down at the dead Indian, as unconcerned as if nothing unusual had occurred. The Indian had not stirred after falling. His spirit had flown before his body touched the ground.

"A n'ate job, that," commented the Irishman, coolly. "Be the seven candlesticks, I am afther bel'avin' that Michael Denny himself couldn't have done a d'ale better. Divil a whoop will he iver whoop in this wurrild ag'in, bad 'cess to the ugly mug iv him!"

Near the corpse lay the bundle which had been seen in the Indian's arms. Haldrick bent over to examine it, but the next moment he started back with a low exclamation.

"What's the matter, thar, youngster?" demanded Josh, who happened to be watching him.

Haldrick rose to his feet, and pointed down at the bundle.

"It's a human being," he said, in a strange voice.

"A what?" ejaculated the hunter; and with one stride he stood over the object.

"A human being," repeated the young man. "Or rather, the dead body of one. Look, uncle, 'tis the old Quaker woman, and she's dead."

The hunter stooped and scrutinized the pale face upturned toward the sky. The light from the distant fire fell upon it, revealing the closed eyelids and the wrinkled features. The form was wrapped in a heavy buffalo-robe.

"Durn my skin ef 'tain't Grandmother Shelbridge!" asseverated the scout. "I'd like to know what that plaguy imp wanted to tote her off fur, arter he'd gone and killed her? But hold on—maybe she ain't dead. I don't see no blood—"

"Sh-h-h!" came from the Child Spy at that moment. "Look! another red-man is coming."

"Yer don't say! Whar is he?" inquired the scout, forgetting Grandmother Shelbridge in an instant.

No answer was needed, for all now saw another Indian coming swiftly toward the woods, in the tracks of the first one. Unlike the first one, however, he was incumbered by no burden, and moved more rapidly. His body was bent till his head was on a level with his knees, and eyes less keen than those of the scouting-party might have mistaken him for a quadruped.

"That cuss seems to be hurryin' to ketch up with the other cuss," said Josh. "Git down, every blamed one of yer, and we'll see ef this

feller won't be prudent enough to save his life by 'ten-din' to his own bizness. See 'yur, Moses; ef yer opens that hash-trap ag'in, it'll be the last time on airth—rip my shirt ef it won't."

All hugged the ground again, and silently awaited the approach of the second savage.

As he neared the woods, they saw that he would pass even closer than the first. Josh Lincoln clatched the reeking knife which lately had done such good service, and like a serpent waiting for his prey, he held himself in readiness to strike.

The Indian came on with stealthy tread, and had almost set his foot on the old scout, when his basilisk orbs caught sight of the crouching forms. He jumped back with a grunt of alarm. Josh shot upward like a rocket, and made a fierce pass at him with the knife; but those who were eagerly watching for the result of the attack, saw the Indian seize the white man's wrist before the fatal blow could be struck. A brief struggle ensued. The friends of the hunter were about to leap to his assistance, when the Indian shouted something in his own language, and the combat ceased as suddenly as it had begun.

Then the old scout was heard to exclaim:

"By the livin' thunder! it's Deer Foot!"

The information acted like a shock upon the girl. With a joyful repetition of the name, followed by a wild burst of laughter, she sprang forward toward the speaker; while Haldrick and Denny went forward hesitatingly and with half distrustful looks.

To their infinite surprise they saw the scout shaking the Indian warmly by the hand. The latter was a finely-formed man, erect and stately, with a plumed head, and the dignified bearing of a chief. The strength of two ordinary men slept in his muscular limbs, and his face—as well as could be judged in the uncertain light—was not only indicative of superior intelligence, and nobleness of mind, but was unusually prepossessing for one of his race. He was nude to the waist, with the exception of the buckskin strips that supported his powder-horn and bullet-pouch; but his nether limbs were incased in leggings and moccasins, heavily fringed with flowing scalp-locks.

The little maiden grasped one of the warrior's hands, and pressed it to her bosom as she said, earnestly:

"Wistah glad to see the chief. Demon glad, too."

The rattlesnake lifted his head and hissed, as if wondering what it was all about; the Indian smiled kindly, and said a few words in broken English, in answer to the child's greeting.

"Boys," said Josh Lincoln, turning to Haldrick and the Irishman, "this is Deer Foot, chief of the Piankashaws. You're both strangers in this part of the kentry, and maybap you never heern tell of him. He's friendly to the whites, and a braver chap never lifted a hand ag'in' hostile reds. This b'ar has slept in Deer Foot's lodge a dozen times, or sich a matter, and Deer Foot has set at Josh Lincoln's table more'n once't. He hates that 'ar sneak, Frondeau, wuss than Moses hates chawin' tobacco, and I reckon that's what makes him and Wistah sich

elus' friends. Them two think a heap of each other, and I s'pose the chief 'u'd 'a' put Frondeau out of the way long 'fore this ef the gal hadn't claimed the right to do that job herself.

"Shoot me, chief, I kum devilish nigh givin' you a hash-settler," added Josh, addressing the Indian. "Lucky fur you that you was quick enough to ketch my wrist; and I s'pose 'twar lucky fur me that you reck'nized my phiz. I jist made wolf-meat out of one varmint. Thar he lays. I hope he warn't a friend of yourn?"

"No," returned the savage, with a shake of his head; "him Wea Injuu—much bad—carry off pale woman—Deer Foot follow—Deer Foot would kill. Ugh!"

"War goin' to wipe him out, eh? Good! But how kum you 'round hyur at sich an outlandish hour?"

"Hunt all day—camp in the woods at night—much great noise wake up—hear Injun whoop—see big burn."

"Then, perhaps, you are able to tell us whether these unfortunate people were killed or captured?" inquired Haldrick, eagerly.

"And whether the horses, be jabbers, were stolen or burnt to dith?" put in the Irishman, planting himself in front of the red-man.

For a moment the savage seemed bewildered; then he answered:

"Wagh! Deer Foot late. All gone when he came."

"All gone! Saw you none of them?"

"See nobody 'cept him," returned the Piankashaw, pointing to the corpse of the Wea Indian. "He come back 'lone—go in house—come out, pale squaw in arms—Deer Foot follow."

"This woman is the only one of the family you have seen?"

"Yes."

"And she is dead."

"Not by a long shot," said the old scout, who had dropped upon his knees beside the unconscious woman. "She's no more dead than you or I be. Her heart beats as reg'lar as mine."

"Probably she has only fainted?"

"Nothin' wuss, I ca'late. Don't see a drop of blood about her, 'cept on the robe, and I spilt that out of the red-skin's karkidge. I've got a flask of brandy somewhar 'bout my clothes. I'll give her a little of that, and you'd better hunt some water, Irish—"

"Me git water," said the chief, and glided away before another word could be said.

The hunter forced a few drops of the brandy down the poor woman's throat, and was returning it to his pocket when the Indian reappeared with a gourd cup full of water, from a spring which he had often seen the Quaker family use.

"I reckon the rest of yer had better go to the house and see what has been done thar," said Josh, as he began to wipe the face of his patient with the cold liquid. "Don't wait fur me. I'll foller as soon as I brng the old gal round."

After a few more words, Deer Foot and Wistah, with Haldrick and Denny, started off across the clearing toward the house, leaving the scout to take care of Grandmother Shelbridge. Moses remained with his master.

About midway between the woods and the building, they came upon two black objects lying near each other on the ground. A closer in-

spection showed them to be the dead bodies of Ephraim's two dogs, Ponto and Prince. They had been shot. After the three men had each secured a burning brand from the fire, to be used as torches, they proceeded to the house, where the Child Spy had already paused to wait for them.

They found the windows of the house all closed, but the front door was standing partly open. They all entered together, and almost the first thing their eyes alighted upon was a big, dark blotch on the floor, which they knew too well was blood. It was evident that somebody had been killed there, though the victim had been removed. This was the main apartment. The furniture was all broken and piled into one corner, while the doors leading into the kitchen and bed-room had been fractured and mutilated by sharp-edged hatchets. The floor was spotted with bloody moccasin-tracks. The stairs leading to the upper story were not damaged, and the aperture above was open.

Holding their fire-brands above their heads, the searchers began to move about in quest of other tell-tale marks. The Indian went into the bed-room, but had no sooner disappeared than he uttered a shout, and it was seen that his torch was suddenly extinguished. Then there was another shout, followed by a hoarse cry, and the next instant was heard the sound of a scuffle. Then two combatants came whirling through the doorway locked in close embrace—reeling, bending and struggling fiercely. One was Deer Foot, the other was a brawny negro. In the latter individual the spectators recognized Ephraim Shelbridge's man-servant, Cæsar.

"Hold! hold!" cried Haldrick in a ringing voice. "Cæsar, are you mad? This is your friend, Deer Foot."

The trio rushed forward simultaneously to separate the struggling men, and in less time than it takes to tell it they were torn apart. The Indian drew up his magnificent form and calmly extended his hand to the darky, who took it with rather a sheepish look.

"Massa red-skin, I's done sorry I made sich a pow'ful mistake—fo' de Lord, I is. When I see'd you wa'n't white I didn't speckilate on de possumbilty ob yo' bein' onny t'ing but an enemy. Law cracky! ef 'yah ain't de young massa as stopped at our house de udder night—and de red-headed massa, too—and bre's dis ugly brack shell, ef dar ain't de Child Spy, wid de rattlesnake round her pooty white neck. I golly! I's glad to see friends once mo'."

"Never mind that," said Haldrick interrupting him. "We want to know what has become of your master and his family. Surely, surely they have not all been butchered in cold blood?"

"No, bress de good Lord, dey hasn't, massa; but dey done been taken pris'ner, dead suah."

"All of them?"

"S'peck so, massa. You see, de circumfution obviated in dis manner: Dem nasty heathen, dey come and sot de barn on fire, and den attack de house while we's ebery one asleep. Dey killed bofe de dogs, and dat made dis niggah so awful mad dat he couln't help p'intin' his musket frough one ob de windahs and shootin' squar' among 'em. I golly! you jes' ought to seen one

ob dem debbils bump his head ag'in' de groun'. Hyahl hyahl! It was a sight to cure de rheumatics. Wal, de folks all got out ob bed and 'gin to put dar clothes on, and dey was pooty bad skeerd, too. Ole massa was cool as a cucumber, but he was pow'ful white, I tell you.

"De Injuns bu'st de door open and poured into de house, screechin' like a holler tree full ob wild-cats. Dey chase de folks from one room to anudder, but massa got stubborn, and stopped to talk wid 'em. Dey wouldn't parley, so he up wid his gun and shot one ob de whelps spang in de face. Dar's whar he fell—whar dat blood is. Den massa tole me to take de ole woman up-stairs and hide her, and I done it. S'peck some ob de Injuns see'd us go up, but dey 'peared to be in too much ob a hurry to foller. Dey captur'd de hull party what was down-stairs—Philis and all—and marched 'em off; and toted off a couple of chaps dat war too dead to skin. When dey war done gone, I brought de old missus down. Den I went back arter my gun, 'kase I done lef' it up dar. 'Fore I could get it I heer'd a screech, and when I come down ag'in, a big Injun was runnin' across de cl'arin' wid de ole missus in he arms."

"Why did you not give chase and rescue her?"

"'Fear'd, massa. T'ought he mought hab udder Injuns waitin' fur him in de woods—knock poor niggah on de head. Arter dat I heer'd your footsteps and your voices, and I t'ought some ob de rascals war comin' back, so I slid into de bedroom, but dar wa'n't no good place to hide in dar, and when I see'd an Injun come in, I couldn't do nuffin' else but bounce onto him. 'Scuse me, massa Deer Foot; I's berry sorry, I is. Poor ole missus! I sp'ose dey done toted her off wid de rest ob de family."

"Thar's whar you're off yer foot, Cæsar!" sung out a well-known voice; and old Josh Lincoln stepped into the house. Grandmother Shelbridge walked by his side, using his strong arm for support.

Of course the faithful Cæsar was delighted beyond measure—not only at the speedy and safe return of his old mistress, but also at the unexpected appearance of the Old Scout of the Wabash.

By this time it was growing light. The eastern sky, over the tree-tops, turned from a black to a grayish hue, and a solitary old cock, who had not been driven away, or frightened into silence by the conflagration, crowed in the new dawn.

Little time was lost. Ephraim Shelbridge, and all his household—except his mother and man-servant—were captives among the Indians, and Josh Lincoln announced his determination to take the trail without delay, and rescue them if it was in the power of mortal man to do so. Deer Foot, Haldrick and Denny assured him that they were ready to follow wherever he saw proper to lead them.

It was decided that Cæsar should take Grandmother Shelbridge down the river to Vincennes, where she would be properly cared for. They were instructed to go first to Josh's cabin, where they would find a canoe, with the aid of which they would be able to reach the settlement in two or three hours.

"What d'yer think of these arrangements, Wistah?" inquired Josh. "Ar' you ready to take the trail? Skin mo alive! whar's the gal gone to?"

The Child Spy had suddenly disappeared. During the conversation she had slipped out unseen, and now she was not to be found in the clearing.

CHAPTER VI. THE SPY'S PERIL.

BENEATH a rocky bluff on the west bank of the Wabash, was the rendezvous of Frondeau and his savage allies. It was a spacious cavern, with a main entrance and several private ones, and was divided into three compartments, which were connected by winding corridors, hung with glistening stalactites.

The mouth, or main entrance, was a large aperture in the perpendicular face of the bluff, fronting the river. Through this, the captives, together with three stolen horses, were conducted. The captives were four in number. Ephraim, Martha, Ruth and the negro woman, Phillis—all securely bound, and guarded by nearly fifty savages.

Neither Frondeau nor Le Buffle had as yet shown himself to the whites, but the voices of both of these leaders had several times been heard amid the jargon of other tongues constantly going on around them, and the prisoners were not slow to attribute the outrage to its proper source.

"Alas! Ephraim," the Quaker's worthy spouse had remarked, "this is a sad return for the kindness we have ever shown toward those two bad men, and is a mark of base ingratitude on the part of these red children of the forest."

And the good man had replied:

"Verily, Martha, the ways of the Lord are mysterious. Since it is His will that we should be overtaken by a mi fortune of this kind, we ought to meet it uncomplainingly. Thou speakest truly concerning the ingratitude of these poor heathen, but it occurreth to my mind that they have been instigated to this atrocity by those two incorrigible wretches, their leaders."

It was about mid-day when they entered the cave. The captives were ranged side by side in the center of the rock-bound chamber, with their hands tied behind them, and compelled to stand there while the Indians performed a jubilation dance around them. All were calm except Phillis, and she had not ceased to quake with fear since the moment of her capture. Ruth stood close to her, and whispered words of encouragement to the poor old creature—herself a little paler than usual, but apparently unmoved by what was going on around her.

While the savages were rejoicing, Frondeau and Le Buffle made their appearance, showing themselves for the first time to the prisoners. As they pressed through the crowd the dancing ceased, and all eyes were turned upon the two chiefs.

"Friend Ephraim, this is truly obliging in you and your good family—to visit me at my home," said the Frenchman, coolly surveying the helpless group, while his lip curled into a sarcastic smile. "I am overjoyed to see you,

and hope you will not be in a hurry to leave us. I have a legion of servants, as you see. They shall wait upon you as long as you stay."

Ephraim did not reply. He knew words of his would be idle, and prudently held his peace.

"Ho! ho!" cried the renegade, with a forced laugh, as he turned toward Le Buffle; "I am afraid our distinguished visitors are going to get stubborn on our hands. They make no effort to be sociable. But let them rest. They have traveled a considerable distance, and probably don't feel in a talking mood. Ho, warriors! bring forth the black keg, and let us celebrate our triumph!"

This was shouted to the Indians in the Indian tongue. It was greeted with a chorus of joyful whoops, and a score of eager braves hastened to do the bidding of their white chief.

In a moment a black keg, filled with something that made it quite heavy, appeared in the midst of the crowd. Jabbering and laughing, the Indians gathered around it with mugs, cups, dippers, and a variety of other small vessels—some of which had been taken from the Quaker's house that morning.

The keg was tapped, and the clamoring wretches began to drink its contents greedily. It was rum! The prisoners had suspected as much at the first appearance of the keg, and seeing the confirmation of their surmise, they became more and more uneasy. Too well they knew that savages grew doubly savage under the influence of rum, and that it had frequently incited them to deeds which they never would have committed in a state of complete sobriety.

Gradually their frequent recourses to the keg began to tell upon the intemperate warriors, and in a short time their mad revelry was at its height. Fifty Indians, in hideous war-paint, all yelling at the top of their voices and dancing about like maniacs, in a half-darkened cave, are calculated to make a scene of the wildest character; and such was the one presented to the captives. Frondeau was in the center of the dusky throng, leaping and flinging his limbs as frantically as any of his painted crew.

The drunken revelers brandished weapons before their eyes, made taunting remarks, pinched their ears and stroked their hair, as if their fingers itched to take the scalps of the pale-faces.

One big fellow, who was very much intoxicated, laid both hands on Ephraim's neck and began to strangle him. Supposing that it was done merely to test his courage, Ephraim remained quiet, and glanced over the red-skin's shoulder with an air of unconcern, as if totally unconscious of the pressure on his trachea. But he felt the sinewy fingers squeezing his throat with a deadlier gripe, and, unable to endure it longer, he looked into the grinning face of his tormentor. To his horror he saw that the wretch was too drunk to know what he was about, and was actually murdering him, while he appeared to think his worst offense to the white man lay in the taunts which he was continually blurting out in his native jargon.

There was no help for it. No one interfered, and Ephraim saw that he would be strangled to death—or, at least, to a state of insensibility—

unless he helped himself. Being unable to use his hands, he lifted one of his heavy boots, and gave the Indian a kick in the abdomen that doubled him up like a clasp-knife, and caused him to come down upon the ground in a sitting posture. For a moment he sat there, gasping for breath; then, with a shriek of ungovernable fury, he leaped up, drew his tomahawk, and aimed a murderous blow at the head of the undaunted pale-face.

Ephraim Shelbridge thought his time had come. But before the glittering hatchet could descend, the keen report of a rifle echoed through the cavern, and the Indian fell dead at the Quaker's feet!

The wild uproar was hushed in an instant, and the half-sobered savages who had witnessed the fall of their brother, turned to see who had committed the deed. On one side of the apartment, standing in plain view, in the mouth of a dark corridor, was Wistah, the Child Spy. She had just lowered her beautiful rifle from her shoulder, and a slender thread of bluish vapor was issuing from its muzzle; while the pet rattlesnake darted its tongue menacingly at the red revelers.

"Ha, ha, ha!" screamed the girl. "Wistah's gun never misses its mark. Let the white captives cheer up. Their friends are near."

Then, with a wave of her little hand, she turned and disappeared.

There was a moment of death-like silence. It was broken by Frondeau, who shouted, hoarsely:

"Some of you follow her—quick. Pursue the she-devil, and bring her back, dead or alive! *Sacre-e-e!* We have encouraged her long enough in her base deviltry!"

The Indians came out of their stupor with a chorus of whoops, and a number of them bounded forward in pursuit of the little maiden. Wistah heard them coming, and realizing that it was now a matter of life and death with her, she shot forward at the top of her speed through the narrow passage.

She had been in the cave for a full hour, seeing and hearing all that had transpired, and might have withdrawn unobserved, as she had done once before, had it not been for the incident that compelled her to betray herself in order to save the Quaker's life.

The passage was not long, and it suddenly widened into a circular chamber, about half the size of the main room. In the center of this chamber was a rope-ladder, hanging from the ceiling where there was an aperture about as large as a common trap-door.

Wistah jumped upon the swinging ladder, and began to ascend with the agility of a practiced sailor.

She had just reached the top when the Indians came pouring into view. One of them hurled his hatchet at her retreating form, while she was in the act of drawing it up through the aperture; but being too tipsy to throw it with precision, it only struck the rock close to her foot, and fell to the ground. Before another attempt on her life could be made she passed through the hole, and was standing upon *terra firma*.

This entrance was a secret one, and the inhabi-

tants of the cave had supposed that it was known only to themselves. It was hidden by a dense growth of bushes, and was in a sort of recess, or avenue, between two huge masses of rock that formed a part of the scraggy ledges that covered this portion of the bluff. The passage was narrow—so narrow indeed that it would have been difficult for a large-sized man to make his way through it—though it widened considerably toward the summit of the rocks.

A few feet from the aperture the passage took an abrupt turn. After passing this point, the Child Spy ran on several yards further, and found herself at the end of the avenue. Here she stopped and sheltered herself, securing a position that afforded her a view of the passage, while her own person was screened. Panting through her clinched teeth, and whispering in broken sentences to the serpent, she hastily loaded her gun.

The foremost Indian came in sight. He had no sooner turned the point of the rock, than he came to a sudden halt, gave vent to a piercing shriek, and fell sprawling on his face. With flashing eyes Wistah dropped her empty gun, and drew a brace of pistols. Two more Indians, one close behind the other, now bounded into view. Wistah discharged one of her pistols, and the savage aimed at sunk to the ground, mortally wounded. She pulled the trigger of the remaining pistol, but it snapped and failed to go off. She tried it three times in quick succession, but with a like result.

The third savage was about to leap over his fallen comrades when another rifle-report reverberated among the ledges, and he fell without a sound.

Three dead Indians were piled up in the passage. The girl looked around to see who it was that had assisted her, and saw old Josh Lincoln some distance above her, kneeling on a shelving rock, with his rifle lying at his side, and a long-barrel pistol in his hand, apparently waiting for an opportunity to shed more blood. As he encountered the wondering glance of the child, he exclaimed:

"You've did well, 'ittle 'un—mash my head, ef you hain't! You've laid two on 'em out fur the buzzards, and now I reckon you'd better put a load into yer shooter, while this hoss gives the rest on 'em the same sort of a reception."

Without a word of reply, Wistah took up her gun and hurriedly rammed home a fresh charge of powder and lead, scarcely for an instant removing her blazing orbs from the point where her first victim had come in sight.

But the rest of her pursuers did not appear. A number of alarmed yells were heard, and then all was quiet. The dead warriors lay undisturbed where they had fallen. For all that was evinced to the contrary, the chase had been abandoned, and would not be renewed. But the watchers were not to be deceived by appearances, and the girl, as she finished loading, cried out to Josh, in her clear, silvery voice:

"We must not tarry here! The devils will go out at the other end of the passage!"

Josh saw the wisdom of her words. He was not so well acquainted with these rocks and their recesses as the girl, but if, as she asserted,

there was another outlet to this narrow aisle, he knew the Indians would soon come up in their rear, and reverse the fortunes of the day.

Returning the pistol to his belt, he snatched up his rifle and leaped down from the ledge.

"You're right, my gal," he said, briefly. "We'd better show some respect for our own bacon, and cut sticks like greased lightnin'. Hyur, little 'un; you're e'ena'most tuckered out. Let me carry you."

He did not give her a chance to resist, but lifted her in his strong arms as if she were an infant, and bounded away with the speed of a deer.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CREEK COVERT.

BEARING the Child Spy in his strong arms, the old scout ran with a velocity that would have done credit to a hardy youth of five-and-twenty. In less than a minute he had placed the rock in his rear, and was dashing down a long, grassy slope, that led from the summit of the bluff to the level land below.

After running half a mile through the woods, Josh halted on the bank of a shady stream; a tributary of the Wabash. He listened intently, but heard nothing from the Indians. He looked back; none of them were in sight. He released Wistah from his arms, and putting his fingers to his mouth, gave vent to a soft tremulous whistle. The signal was answered by the prompt appearance of a canoe, that put out from the opposite side of the stream, and came swiftly toward them.

In the canoe were two men and a dog. The former were Haldrick and Denny; the latter was the scout's faithful friend, Moses. Denny was plying the paddle vigorously.

As the canoe touched the bank at the feet of the fugitives, its occupants gazed inquiringly at Lincoln and the girl. The dog wagged his tail and whined for joy.

"We heard the discharge of fire-arms," said Haldrick, with an anxious look. "Are either of you hurt?"

"No; but thar's a pack of red-skins on our track," was the hasty rejoinder. "Has Deer Foot kum back?"

"No."

Josh lifted the girl into the vessel, and then stepped in himself.

"Give me the paddle, Irish. Ef we can't give the varmints zho slip, we'll have to say good-day to our ha'r—that's all. Thar's 'bout half a hundred of 'em, I calc'late."

He pressed the ash-blade beneath the surface of the water, and started the canoe upstream.

The afternoon was more than half spent, but the sun shone from an unclouded sky.

The old scout propelled the light craft as swiftly as possible against the current, at the same time darting frequent glances over his shoulder at the point where he and Wistah had embarked.

"The imps won't find it much trouble to follow my trail, when they once git started," he observed. "The way I pounded the 'arth warn't gentle, by no means. I hope they won't git the chief."

"The chief!" echoed Wistah, looking up quickly.

"Deer Foot," explained the scout.

"Where is he? Did he go to the cave?"

"No tellin' whar he went. He kum up the river with us, and as soon as we arrove in these parts we run into this crick and hove to; and then we left these two boys, with the dog, to take keer of the boat, while me and the chief started off to scout a little. We sep'rated, and I hain't seen him since. You was the fu'st pusson I run afoul of. How did yer git in sech a scrape, little 'un?"

The wild girl, in her own characteristic way, related how she had shot the drunken Indian while spying in the cave, and had been forced to fly for her life.

While she was thus employed, Josh changed the course of the canoe, and gave it an impetus that sent it skimming toward the land. Here was one of the deepest parts of the creek, where the water could scarcely be seen to move, and was overshadowed by a tree of gigantic size, that grew on a projection of the bank.

"Duck yer heads down," admonished the scout.

And to the surprise of his companions, he ran the boat through a screen of bushes and roots, which at one moment slapped them in the faces, and the next closed behind them. They glided under the bank, and found themselves directly beneath the monstrous tree. Here the light vessel stood still, and the hunter laid down his paddle.

It was a snug retreat, and one whose existence would hardly have been suspected by any one on the stream, unless he were already aware of it.

"Begorra, this is a r'ale beauty iv a hidin' place," declared the Irishman. "The divil hisself wouldn't be thinkin' iv lukin' afther us here, though he might luk ivery where ilse. Arrah! Mither Linkin, and ain't this jist the place to pass around the demijohn, sure? Come, now; I know it's yerself that's wishin' fer a drap iv the craythur to warrum the heart iv yeez."

"Bah! you're as bad to drink sperrits as a civilized Injun," said Josh, producing his flask and handing it to Denny.

"Be the Vargin! av I was an Injun I'd be civilized, av it was only to get me allowance iv the stuff," said Denny, tipping the flask and allowing the liquor to trickle down his throat.

They drank all around, even to Wistah—who merely tasted it, however—and then Haldrick remarked:

"This is, indeed, a good hiding-place—provided the Indians know nothing about it. We were fortunate in reaching it before your pursuers came in sight, and I feel that we may rest here in safety for awhile. When did you discover this, uncle?"

"Never diskivered it," was the brief rejoinder.

"The honor of discovery belongs to some one else, then?"

"It b'longs to this hyar gal."

"What? Wistah?"

"Reckon it does. Leastwise she's the one as showed it to Josh Linkin, and I ain't shore but his ha'r was saved by the sarcumstance. You see it kum about in this way. Three or four

months gone, me and the chief, Deer Foot, war sent to the upper Wabash kentry to see how the biggest part of the Injuns war feelin' to'ards the whites, and to find out who was murderin' so many helpless pale-faces in that region. Wal, we visited two or three villages, and was treated fu'st-rate, but the second day arter we started hum we found out that we was *follered*. A hull raft of reds war hoverin' round us, and we made up our minds as how they war bent on liftin' our skulps. As scon as we l'arned this, we 'cluded to travel by night and lay to in the day-time. But the very fu'st night we war headed off by this hyur gal. She appeared before us as suddintly as a speerit, in her little canoe, and told us a lot of Injuns war camped on a sand-bar 'bout a half-mile below, waitin' fur us. Then she told us to foller her, and we done it. She turned into this crick, and guided us to this very spot.

"Wal, we hid hyur fur three hull days, while theimps war swarmin' round us as thick as lice in a nigger's head; and then we ventur'd out, and went on our way 'thout ketchin' a glimpse of a durned Injun. So, yer see, the little 'un knowed all 'bout this holo 'fore I ever heern tell of it."

To all appearance the wild girl did not hear this brief recital. Crouching down in the bottom of the canoe, she amused herself by fondling Demon's head, and whispering secrets to him one after another; while ever and anon she burst into a low, rippling laugh, as if highly entertained by something he had said in return.

At first it seemed quite dark in the little harbor, but the eyes soon became so accustomed to the gloom, that faces and features were readily distinguished.

"Do you really suppose those Indians followed your trail?" inquired Haldrick, after listening in vain for some evidence.

"Hain't a doubt on't," was the prompt reply.

"Reds is reds wharever you find 'em, and 'ta'n't in thar natur' to give up a chase so easy [arter four of thar number has been wiped out.]"

"Then they are very quiet about it."

"In course they be. That's nothin' more'n nat'ral. When reds git arter a chap, they make a turrible hullabaloo as long as they keep him in sight, but when it kums to follerin' a trail, then they go to t'other extreme. S'pect they've already follered my tracks to the crick, and don't know which way to turn. Reckon they think Wistah is still hid 'mong the rocks."

"Why?"

"Bah! didn't I pick her up and carry her, so's she wouldn't make any trail?"

"True; I did not think of that. Perhaps, then—since it was Wistah they first started in pursuit of—they will search for her among the rocks, and let you go?"

"Nary bit of it, youngster. These varimints ar' too anxious to grab Josh Linkin, to throw away a chance like this."

"What do you suppose has become of Deer Foot?" said Haldrick.

"I s'pose he's safe somewhar," replied the scout. "Them blasted Wea Injuns ain't 'cute enough to ketch him."

"But, if he returns to the spot where he left us, and finds we are not there—"

"He'll kum straight to this spot," said the scout. "He ain't too fur away to know that I've been pursooed, and he knows I'll break fur this hidin'-place, jist as he would do. 'Sh!—listen!"

The scout had suddenly dropped his voice to a whisper, and seized his dog by the collar, just as the animal pricked up his ears and half rose.

"Down, Moses!—down, you rascal!" he muttered, peremptorily, and the dog cowered down, and lay perfectly still.

Then they all listened, and plainly heard voices in conversation above them. That they were Indian voices was at once understood by all, both from the intonation and the peculiar language in which they were talking. The speakers were evidently in motion, however, for the sound soon died away in the distance, and silence once more reigned over the covert.

The whites breathed freely again.

"Them war Injuns lookin' fur me," asserted Lincoln. "They've divided, I reckon—some goin' up-stream and some down. We'd better not ventur' to gab above a whisper now."

A few minutes later they heard a whistle—a low, tremulous whistle, precisely like the signal given by Josh Lincoln, when he and Wistah had stopped on the bank of the creek an hour before. It was as clear and mellow as the note of a robin, and seemed to be in the air above them.

Josh raised his finger.

"That's Deer Foot," he said, in a low tone. "He don't want an ans'er. He knows we're hyur, and that signal war to tell us that he's around. Hark!"

Another low trill, in exact imitation of the first, was now heard.

"Same thing twice; that means, 'lay low, and keep mum!'" whispered Josh. "We're in a clus' place, and no mistake. Injuns swarmin' all around us. We hain't got nothin' to do but lay still, and wait for sunkthin' furdur from the chief."

About ten minutes later, while they were all sitting quietly in the canoe, they were startled by a sudden agitation of the water around the boat. Before any of them could speak, a dark object rose to the surface, so near that they could have touched it with their hands. In the fading light that stole into the covert, they recognized the round, shaven head of an Indian, with its single scalp-lock and crest of eagle-feathers.

Denny clubbed his gun in an instant.

"Bedad, it's wan iv thim painted nagurs, as sure as me mother's son is a rid-headed gossoon from Tipperary!"

And murder would have been committed in another moment, had it not been for the activity of Josh, who seized the uplifted gun and pressed the Irishman back upon the seat he had vacated.

"Be still, you durn fool! Can't yer tell a friend from an enemy?"

The Indian grasped the canoe, and raised his head above the gunwale, disclosing the familiar features of Deer Foot, the Piankashaw. The cunning fellow had dived into the creek, and entered the sequestered nook under water.

His eagle eyes gleamed like coals of fire in the

partial darkness, as they flashed from one to the other of the group.

"All here?" he asked, abruptly.

"Ever' blessed one of us, from Moses up," answered Josh.

"No hurt?" was the next inquiry.

"Nary scratch," asserted the scout. "We've been fort'nate 'nough to keep hull skins on our karkidges so fur, though me and the gal had to cut sticks purty spry like, to save ourn. Wistah has lost her grip 'mong this pack of devils, and I reckon they'd knock her over now, as quick as they would any of us. Whar'd yer kum from, chief? and what yer been doin'?"

"Come from woods—been scoutin'—peep in de cave."

"Been to the cave, eh? Did yer see any thing?"

"See two, t'ree, eight, much dozen Wea Injuns. Much rum—bad drunk—udder Injuns in woods huntin' for you and little gal—no find. Wagh!"

"Did you see the F'rencher?"

"Frondeau in cave—Le Buffle, too—mad, both. Tell Wistah be ketch alive—dead—any way. Send warriors out to hunt Wistah—Deer Foot follow—warriors git on Lincoln's trail—lose it by de stream—spread out—go up stream, down stream, both side—hunt hard—Deer Foot watch."

"Good!" exclaimed the hunter; "that proves as the impz don't know nothin' 'bout this hole vit. But I'm powerful 'feared they'll find it. They're like to, ef they s'arch clus'. Did yer see any trace of the captives?"

"Yes; see all ob 'em," was the ready response.

"War they in the cave?"

"All in de cave—old Quaker and squaw, young maiden, and de black pale-face squaw—all 'live."

"Does yer know what the reds intend to do with 'em?"

"No."

"Wistah heard Frondeau and Le Buffle talk," joined in the wild girl. "She think they will kill captives."

"All of them?" almost gasped Haldrick.

"All but the pretty maiden, Ruth. Frondeau says she must be his squaw—his wife."

"Never while I live!" said the young man, with emphasis.

"Deer Foot go now," said the chief, hurriedly. "Lincoln best stay in canoe, take care udder pale-faces. Come back by'm by—when Deer Foot cry like night-hawk, let Lincoln come—want him then."

"All right, chief. What you goin' to do now?"

"Goin' to keep eye skinned—watch cave—see where dey put captives—den come back."

"Wait," interposed the Child Spy. "Wistah and Demon will go too. We can help the white captives, can't we, Demon?"

And she was about to step over the side of the canoe, when Josh laid his hand on her arm, and detained her by gentle force.

"Don't do it, little 'un," he said, tenderly, almost pleadingly. "I'm afeared to let you go out now, when a hull raft of the varmints ar' waitin' to take yer young life. They'd kill yer on sight now, and old Josh 'ud be powerful lonesome without Wistah. Don't go, little 'un."

The child looked into the old hunter's face a moment, as if surprised. Then, without a word, she sunk back into her former position, and was silent.

Deer Foot quietly sunk beneath the surface of the water, and rose no more within the little cove.

CHAPTER VIII.

A TERRIBLE ALTERNATIVE.

As may well be supposed, the prisoners were no less astonished than the savages, when the drunken warrior fell dead at Ephraim's feet; and their surprise was not lessened when they caught a glimpse of Wistah in the corridor. But the Quaker—notwithstanding he was a man of peace, and religiously averse to bloodshed—in his heart thanked God, and blessed the wild girl, for his providential delivery from death. And when he heard Frondeau's wrathful mandate, and saw more than a dozen armed warriors give chase to the daring child, he prayed that Heaven might help her to elude her evil-minded pursuers.

The dead Indian was picked out of his blood, and borne away amid howls of lamentation.

The report of firearms and the shrieks and yells of Indians were plainly heard in the cavern, and a few minutes later some of the pursuers returned with the statement that three of their number had been slain, and Wistah had met some friends who had helped her to escape. More than half of the entire band were then sent out, with orders to butcher every pale-face or red enemy found in the vicinity. Le Buffle went at the head of this party. Frondeau remained in the cave with the remnant of his force, to guard the captives.

He planted himself in front of the latter, flushed with rage and strong drink, and ejaculated:

"Look here, you canting, meek-faced hypocrites! what are you trembling about? Don't you know that you have friends outside who have followed us hither for the purpose of rescuing you? *Parbleu!* that ought to be a source of comfort to your quaking hearts," and he sneered maliciously.

"Dost thou see aught of trembling here?" calmly inquired the Quaker, "Poor Phillis alone evinceth terror. The only one we fear is never feared by such as thou."

"Of whom are you talking?"

"The Lord of hosts."

"Shut your head!" thundered the irate Frenchman, stamping his foot. "If you dare to preach to me while you are in my power, I'll split your old skull as I would a wolf's. You may smile now, Ephraim Shelbridge, in the expectation of being rescued, but when Le Buffle and his braves return with the scalps of your friends, your composure will forsake you. Listen, man; you are to be *killed!* Do you hear? You are to be burned in fire as hot as hell itself! and now that I've got you under my thumb, all the powers of earth can not save your life!"

"I fear thee not," returned the good man, with an unmoved countenance. "Thou canst not harm a hair of my head, unless it be the will of God. In him I trust."

"Bah! it will do you no good. You think I

am talking merely to frighten you, but you will discover ere long that I mean every word that I have said. You, good woman, shall not be put to death," he observed, turning to Martha, "but shall be some red man's slave."

"Death with my husband were better than such a fate," said the woman in a husky voice.

"Perhaps it would please you better," replied the villain, "but for that reason, it would not please me so well."

"Oh, thou art a wretch, indeed!" exclaimed Ephraim.

Frondeau broke into a scornful laugh.

"You are right—I *am* a wretch!" he cried, harshly. "The devil is in me. I want to murder somebody. Blood! blood! See here, my darling little brown-eyed witch; I haven't told you what is to be your fate," he added, changing his tone, and playfully patting Ruth's pale cheek. "You shall live, and be a queen over these noble red-men of the forest. You shall be my wife, fair Ruth. Isn't that far better than death?"

"Better!" echoed Ruth, bitterly. "It is a thousand times worse!"

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed the monster, and there was a hard ring in his voice that made the girl shudder; "that is a good joke. Worse! The idea! Of course you can't mean it. The exalted position of a married queen can never be worse than death. Preposterous! *Croyez-moi*, I will be the best of husbands, Ruth, and nothing that I can obtain shall you ever want for."

"Heartless villain! Heaven will not permit thee to accomplish thy hellish purpose."

"*Merci!*" returned the Frenchman, with mock courtesy. "It may be that you are right, my pretty charmer, but I hardly think Heaven will interfere in such a trifling affair as this."

"Wha' you done gwine to do wid dis chile, Massa Frondeau?" stammered Phillis, who had been shaking from head to foot, as she awaited her turn to be apostrophized by the unfeeling wretch.

"You will find out soon enough," was the growling answer. "Perhaps some of these red-skins will cook you for breakfast."

"De Lord help us!" cried the poor woman, rolling up her eyes; and her teeth chattered worse than ever. "For de good gracious sake, don't let 'em do dat. I isn't good to eat—fo' de Lord I isn't. It's *bitter*."

At this juncture one of Le Buffle's party came in, and told Frondeau that a trail, which certainly belonged to the Old Scout of the Wabash, had been found on the bluff, but was lost at the creek below, showing that the white man had taken to the water. The braves had scattered up and down the stream in search of him, but without success. The runner further informed his chief that Wistah had mysteriously disappeared, and no trace of her could be discovered.

Frondeau gritted his teeth with rage, and dispatched an order to Le Buffle to keep his warriors in the woods all night if necessary, but not to return without having captured one or both of the fugitives.

"Josh Lincoln!" he muttered, to himself. "If that man is in this vicinity there can be

no doubt that he followed our trail, for the purpose of attempting the release of his friends. In all probability that nephew of his, from the East, came with him, and is not far away at this moment. Curse me! I should like to see Le Buffle bring him in, for I know he wears a belt of gold around his body."

Night had closed in by this time, and the savages remaining in the cavern had built a fire on the rocky floor, which served to lighten the apartment and cook the evening meal.

The captives—with the exception of Ruth—were now compelled to sit on a pile of skins, with their backs to the wall; and in this position their feet were bound. Food was offered them, and one of the warriors was commanded to feed them all they wanted. None refused to eat, for they had not tasted a mouthful of food since the preceding evening.

Frondeau cut the cord that bound Ruth's hands, and she stood forth with all her limbs free. Then, clutching one of her wrists, he forcibly led her out of the main apartment—through the dark corridor where Wistah had lain in concealment—into the small circular chamber beyond. This room was lighted by a few burning fagots leaped together on the ground, but was vacant.

"Girl!" said Frondeau, gruffly, as he faced about and stood confronting the maiden; "you are now in the chamber of death. Look about you and reflect upon it."

Ruth glanced carelessly about the room, and then returned his gaze with one that was just as steady and cold.

"You observe?" he continued, with austerity.

"I observe nothing remarkable," was the imperturbable rejoinder.

"I did not promise to show you anything remarkable. I brought you here to let you see where we put our captives to death. In the middle of the apartment, where the rope ladder touches the floor, you see a stone slab, square in shape, with handles on each side. If that were lifted, there would be disclosed a dark hole in the ground, like a well. It is ten feet deep. At the bottom is a narrow passage that opens out upon the face of the bluff, near the water's edge. This, Ruth, is one of the secret entrances to the cave. Look!"

He bent down as he spoke, and, exerting all his strength, lifted the heavy slab, and laid it aside. The act revealed a hole in the earth, just as he had asserted it would do. It was several feet in diameter, and apparently many more in depth, and resembled an ordinary well.

"There!" said Frondeau, curtly.

"Why dost thou exhibit this secret entrance to me?" quietly interrogated the girl.

"Not to help you escape from your prison," was the hissing response, "but for the reason that it is used for something else besides an entrance to our cave. These Indians have brought white captives here before, and I merely wish to give you a hint as to the usual mode of disposing of them. A fire is built in the bottom of the hole, and by the aid of the air drawn through the passage, it is made as hot as the fiery furnace. The smoke ascends through the aperture, which you see above. The victim is then suspended by a chain, one end of which is secured

to the rock where this ladder is now fastened, and there, directly over the well of fire, he is allowed to hang until he is not only roasted, but burned to a crisp state."

"Horrible!" burst from Ruth's lips.

An expression of fiendish satisfaction leaped into the villain's eyes, as he saw that he had moved her.

"You will have an opportunity to witness a scene of that kind ere long," he said maliciously.

"You cannot have forgotten that your father shot one of the Indians when they entered his house. The friends of the deceased are bent upon sacrificing the old man, and this is the way it is to be done."

A deathly pallor crept over the face of the girl, and for a moment she seemed turned into stone as she stared mutely at the speaker. Then, without the slightest tremor in her voice, she said:

"This, after all the disinterested kindness my father has shown thee? Monster! thou wilt not dare."

"I!" exclaimed the Frenchman, arching his eyebrows in feigned astonishment. "Ruth, you do me wrong. I did not say that I would perform the deed."

"But said the red-men would perform it," continued Ruth, steadily; "and I know that thou art the chief of this lawless band. Thy word is law here, and the power to save my father's life is thine alone."

"There you err, my dear," said the Frenchman, with a heartless smile. "The power of which you speak may be mine—I will not deny it—but it is not mine alone."

"Whoso else?"

"Yours, Ruth."

"Mine! Oh, do not mock me!"

"'Tis the last thing I would think of doing. Tell me, fairest of your sex, what would you do to save your father?"

"What would I not do?"

"Yet, what would you do?"

"Oh, I would run any earthly risk—none would be too great! I would work hard all my life; I'd be a slave—a drudge—in the vilest of Indian wigwams, and subsist on bread and water. I'd part with health and happiness; nay, with life itself! I'd take his place and die, if that would save my father."

"Or even become the voluntary wife of Frondeau, the Frenchman," added the apostate, still smiling his unfeeling smile.

Ruth crushed her bloodless lip between her teeth.

"Heaven pity me!" she murmured, still striving to keep down the emotion that struggled up from an overcharged bosom. "If you are human you cannot do this wicked thing. Your conscience will not permit you—"

"Conscience! Ha! ha! I have none. When you make an appeal to my conscience, Ruth, you waste your words upon an empty void, that can only give you back the echo of your own sweet voice. Hear me, girl! reproaches or tears will never soften me, or make me ashamed of my evil ways. I admit that I am a faithful subject of His Satanic Majesty. But, for all that, I would much rather have you become my wife voluntarily and lawfully, than to force you into sub-

mission to my will without a marriage ceremony. In the Wea village there is a French missionary. He can be brought to this cave on three hours' notice, and will make us man and wife according to the rites of civilized nations. Refuse, and I swear your fate shall be a hundred times worse."

Ruth started, and trembled.

"And more," hissed the villain; "a refusal from you will seal the doom of your father. Marry me, and he shall live. Refuse, and his fate shall be the horrible death I have pictured to you. Do you hear? I don't speak idly. By our lady, I will live up to what I say. I will go now and leave you here alone for a few minutes, in order that you may have time in which to consider the question. Don't waste your time in trying to escape, for escape is impossible. I will return presently to hear your decision."

With that, he strode past the girl, and left the apartment.

She glanced around like a frightened fawn and realized that she was alone. A low sigh of relief trembled through her lips, but the feeling that produced it was of short duration when she remembered that he would soon return to hear her final decision. What could she do? Must she consent to become his wife, and lead a miserable life ever after? or must she reject his loathsome suit, and abide by the terrible consequences?

She heard the measured footsteps of the guard overhead, and knew it would be folly to try and escape by means of the rope-ladder. Indeed, she scarcely thought of such a thing, for she did not want to leave until her parents could go also.

While she was standing there, with her hands clasped in front of her, and her dry, tearless eyes fastened upon the ground, she was startled by the sudden appearance of an Indian's head. It came up through the hole in the floor, which Frondeau had left uncovered, and slowly rose until a pair of broad shoulders were visible. The dim firelight revealed a crest of eagle-feathers, and two flashing eyes that seemed to scan every part of the chamber in a moment. Ruth was astonished and alarmed, and she drew back from the hole instinctively.

After taking a cautious survey of the chamber, and satisfying himself that it was empty, with the exception of the white captive, the Indian leaped nimbly out of the hole, and stood in front of the girl. She recoiled, and was about to scream, when the fire flashed up with redoubled brightness, and threw its light upon the red-man's features. He was instantly recognized. It was Deer Foot, the Piankashaw!

With a low exclamation of joy, Ruth sprang forward and caught the chief's hand. Deer Foot glanced quickly around, and put his finger to his lips.

"No make noise," he whispered. "Be much still—bad Injuns all round—hear talk."

"But why art thou here, friend?" inquired Ruth, letting her voice sink to a whisper. "This is rashness. Dost not know thou art surrounded by peril?"

"Wagh! Deer Foot know," replied the chief. "He no 'fraid squaws. Don't know Deer Foot round—slip out ag'in—won't see him. Where udder captives?"

"They are in the other part of the cave."

"Will be dere all night?"

"I cannot tell. Why does Deer Foot ask?"

"Friends come to-night—two, t'ree, five friends—Lincoln, Wistah, two udders—take you home, mebbe."

Ruth started forward, clasping her hands.

"Oh! is this true? Will we be taken away from this detestable place?" she faltered.

"Mebbe—try hard—be here to-night!—mus' keep 'wake. Deer Foot lookin' round—find hole—crawl in, so red-skins no see him—long hole—bring Deer Foot here. Wagh!"

"Sh!" suddenly admonished Ruth. "Somebody comes! Fly, my friend—fly for thy life!"

A heavy footstep sounded in the passage. The chief heard it, and hurriedly whispered:

"Go now—come ag'in to-night—let the white lily be brave."

As he uttered the last word the bold Piankashaw sprung into the hole again and disappeared.

Prondeau came in, and found the maiden standing there alone, just as he had left her. After awhile he led her back to the large room where the other prisoners were, but not until she had told him her decision. It was given in these words:

"If by no other means my father can be saved from death, and my mother from a life of drudgery, then, to accomplish this, I will become thy wife one week from to-day!"

CHAPTER IX.

THE BLUFF-STRUGGLE.

AFTER sitting quietly in the canoe for nearly three hours, patiently awaiting the return of the Piankashaw, old Josh Lincoln and his companions were almost startled by the strange cry of a night-hawk directly above them. Recognizing Deer Foot's signal, the scout took up his rifle to go, at the same time whispering a few words of instruction to Haldrick and Denny. They were to remain in the cove a few minutes longer, and then, if all around was still, they were to drop down the creek to its mouth, there to wait for further developments. Having received a promise that his instructions should be carried out as far as practicable, Josh slipped over the side of the canoe and dropped into the water. He was nimbly followed by the Child Spy, who coolly announced her intention of going with him. Seeing that she was determined, he did not remonstrate, and together they passed out of the dark nook. Moses, much against his will, was left in the canoe, as one of its guards.

Deer Foot was standing under the large tree that grew above the hiding-place, when he was joined by the old scout and Wistah. He hastily told them where he had been, and what he had seen, and assured them that the rescue of the captives would be a most dangerous and difficult task. He did not deem it advisable, however, to postpone the attempt, for to-night less than half of the Indians would occupy the cave, whereas, to-morrow night, it was reasonable to suppose that the entire band would be there. To act at once was the agreement, and with this determination, they set out in the direction of the cavern.

The night was not far advanced, and there

was no occasion for haste. They proceeded slowly, Deer Foot taking the lead, while Wistah and the scout followed silently side by side. The darkness was not intense. The sky was veiled by an unbroken mass of leaden clouds, but there was a moon behind them, whose obscured light prevented the earth from being shrouded in inky blackness. Several times sounds were heard, which—though clever imitations of bird calls—did not deceive the experienced ears of the trio. Far up the creek they heard the faint cry of a loon; from a nearer point came the dismal hoot of an owl; and once the plaintive wail of a whippowil sounded so close to them that they all instinctively stopped. Too well they knew that these calls were uttered by Indians, and consequently they were extremely cautious in their movements.

As they proceeded, the Piankashaw was brought to sudden halt by the snapping of a twig, and a very audible rustle in some bushes close at hand. He promptly crouched down, till his dark form blent with the undergrowth, and his companions were not slow to follow his example. Immediately a howl of the most woeful import—precisely like that of a wolf—broke the stillness, and was answered by at least a dozen other howls, coming from different directions and from various distances. The three scouts rose and pursued their way in silence, though every one was beset by a feeling of uneasiness, and kept darting piercing glances around them, as they all, of one accord, quickened their pace. No words passed between them, but they were all haunted by the same fear; that a prowling savage had seen them, and communicated the intelligence to his brethren by counterfeiting the howl of a wolf.

In a few moments they began to ascend the bluff. The woods grew thin here, and the further they went the less trees were there to darken their path; but they threw themselves on the ground, and crawled up the hill with studied circumspection. In this way they finally reached the top. All was still now, and not a living thing was to be seen. Beginning to hope that, after all, they had not been discovered, they crept forward and hid themselves among the rocks. They shunned the passage in which Wistah and Josh had done such bloody work, for in it was the aperture by which the girl had made her exit from the cave, and knowing that it was no longer a secret to their enemies, the savages had in all probability stationed a guard over it. The nook where they paused was overshadowed by the scraggy rocks that loomed up around them. In their position, facing the river, they had an unobstructed view of the edge of the bluff, which was about fifty feet distant. The intervening space was a smooth plateau, over which the ledges did not extend.

Here the trio crouched for several minutes, conversing in whispers, and waiting for a suitable time to commence operations. No sounds were heard—nothing to indicate that their whereabouts was known to any other mortal beside themselves. They knew they were directly over the cave; yet no sounds were heard below. For all that, however, they could not believe that the Indians were asleep, and they

continued to wait for the further advancement of the night.

Presently the Piankashaw said:

"Wistah and Lincoln stay here—Deer Foot go see if Injuns down dere—eberry t'ing much still."

"Down where?" asked Lincoln.

"Down by de ribber—by de mouth of cave. Be back quick soon—keep eye skinned. Ugh!"

First he swept a keen look around; then he glided away in a stooping posture, as noiselessly as a cat.

Lincoln and Wistah watched him as he receded across the open space, and saw him stop on the edge of the bluff. There he craned his neck over the cliff, and gazed downward. The face of the bluff was perpendicular. Below him, and almost on a straight vertical line from his position, was the mouth of the cave. His purpose was to see if any of the enemy were visible in that vicinity, and to learn if possible the strength of the guard there stationed.

His friends regarded him anxiously. To their horror, he had scarcely inclined his body to look down, when they saw a dark figure spring up out of the earth, as it were, and aim a deadly blow at the Piankashaw. The latter eluded it, however, by a quick movement; the next instant he grappled with his dusky assailant, and then began a desperate struggle on the very verge of the bluff!

It could be seen, even at that distance, that Deer Foot's adversary was an Indian, and one of extraordinary size and strength. Josh Lincoln was about to rush forward to the assistance of his friend, when a loud yell proclaimed the propinquity of other enemies, and he stood still. A shower of detached fragments of limestone came rattling down from the ledge that towered above them, but the hunter did not turn round. His eyes were fastened upon the combatants. He discovered that Deer Foot's opponent was no other than Le Buffle, the big chief of the Weas! He recognized the outlines of the huge, unshapely form. This Indian was noted for his wondrous strength, and the scout was seized with a reasonable fear that he would defeat the gallant Piankashaw. He must aid his friend in some way, and yet he knew there were other savages near to intercept him if he attempted to reach the spot.

Without moving from his tracks, Josh brought his gun to his shoulder, and covered Le Buffle's head. Just then a wild yell saluted his ears, and *crack! crack! crack!* went a half-dozen rifles near at hand. A bullet grazed his forehead, at the roots of his hair, and he felt the warm blood start down his face; but still he stood unmoved. He followed the motions of the combatants with the muzzle of his gun, until he was sure of his mark, and then he pulled the trigger. There was a shriek—a despairing effort to keep up—and then both of the Indians, Le Buffle and Deer Foot, tumbled headlong over the cliff!

Josh Lincoln drew back with an exclamation of horror, as he saw what he had done. In attempting to save the life of the chief, he had probably hastened his death. But his mind was averted from this painful reflection by the

familiar crack of Wistah's rifle. Before he could turn round, some heavy object came tumbling down from the rocks above, and struck the earth with a dull "thud," close to his feet. He looked down. There lay the dead body of an Indian, mangled and bleeding. Clear and loud rung out Wistah's mocking laugh, and the answer came back in whoops of vengeful rage. At a loss what to do, the old scout stood for a moment irresolute. Shadowy figures flitted across his vision, and he readily realized that he and Wistah were in a perilous position. As he darted sharp glances hither and thither, to see where the enemy was the weakest, he caught sight of an Indian aiming at him with a gun! The wretch was half-hid by a point of rock, and was not more than ten feet away.

Quick as thought the scout snatched his pistol from his belt, and fired at the savage. The latter dropped his gun as suddenly as if it were a piece of red-hot iron, and throwing up his hands with a hoarse cry, he staggered backward into the arms of one of his fellows, who hurriedly dragged him out of sight.

The scout now saw that a race for life was the only course left in which there dwelt the slightest hope. He whirled round to seize the Child Spy, intending to carry her again, as he had done that afternoon; but, to his astonishment, the girl was nowhere to be seen. She had suddenly disappeared. He called to her in a stentorian voice, but the only answer was a chorus of savage whoops, and another discharge of firearms. He heard several bullets cut the air close to his body, and saw a number of dark forms inclosing him in a circle. His situation was one of extreme peril. Wistah was gone—whither and how, he was puzzled to determine—and he had only to look out for himself.

Clubbing his rifle he gave vent to a whoop that would have done justice to any of the red demons around him, and bounded forward with irresistible velocity. Two or three Indians tried to stop him, but swinging his gun round his head he laid one of them out, and the rest got out of his way. Then he dashed on, and his assailants were now all behind him. They gave chase, like a troop of howling wolves after a deer, and several tomahawks were hurled at him; but he sprang nimbly from side to side while he ran, and thus escaped unhurt. After making a few turns among the rocks, in the hope of confounding his pursuers, he suddenly changed his tactics, and sped away like an arrow in the direction of the creek. This movement was so unexpected that he gained quite an advantage by it, leaving the foremost savage a considerable distance in the rear.

He no longer dodged about to evade the missiles thrown by the Indians, but held on his way as straight and steady as the flight of a bee. Indeed, that precaution was no longer necessary, as the Indians were now so intent on the chase that the thought of killing him as he ran seemed to have fled their minds. There was scarcely an Indian in the Wabash country who had never heard of Josh Lincoln's extraordinary fleetness of foot, and they now saw the necessity of bending every energy to the task of overhauling him.

Supposing that Haldrick and Denny had, by

this time, run the canoe down to the mouth of the creek, Josh's first intention was to head toward that point, and join his friends; but a second thought decided him on a different course. Fearful that, by leading his pursuers in that direction, he would endanger the lives of those whose safety he prayed for, he concluded not to approach them until he had thrown the savages off his track; so he directed his flight toward the cove in the creek, which had twice proved the salvation of his life, and which he hoped might again come in good play.

Having determined upon this course of action, he put his best foot forward, and shot like a meteor down the slope knowing that the success of his plan depended chiefly upon the distance he would be able to place between himself and his enemies, before reaching his destination. He did not regard the feat as a difficult one. Few men on the border could compete with the Old Scout of the Wabash in foot racing, and he had no fear of being stripped of his laurels by any of those who were now on his track. As soon as he entered the thick timber, he was out of sight of the savages, and he could tell that he was leaving them further and further behind each moment. After losing sight of him, they soon ceased their yelling.

The scout reached the bank of the creek about a hundred yards below the hiding-place. He turned abruptly to the left, and walked into the water as if he were starting down-stream; but as soon as he was fairly in he turned again, and began to wade up-stream as rapidly and noiselessly as possible.

On entering the deep water surrounding the nook, he softly dropped beneath the surface, scarcely creating a ripple in his descent; and when he arose he was safe under the bank, enveloped in total darkness. Here, with only his head and shoulders out of water, he breathed and listened.

CHAPTER X.

THE UNLUCKY AMBUSH.

JOSH LINCOLN'S anxiety about the welfare of his friends was so great, that he forgot to congratulate himself on his own fortunate escape. He had seen Deer Foot fall over the edge of the bluff, in the arms of Le Buffle; Wistah had disappeared; while Haldrick and Denny doubtless were now lying at the mouth of the stream in imminent danger.

Besides, there was the Quaker family still in the cave—in captivity that was more hopeless than ever!

Two or three times he heard Indian voices about him, and once he distinctly caught the sound of a body moving through the water, not far away, by which he well knew that his pursuers were searching for him; but he felt comparatively secure in his present concealment.

For about an hour he waited, when, all suspicious sounds having ceased, he determined to try to reach the mouth of the stream and silently left the covert. With only his head above the surface—yet careful to hold his gun out of the water—the old scout waded to the opposite side of the creek, and climbed up the steep bank. There he stopped long enough to load his rifle, and then, with every faculty on the alert he

turned his face down-stream. He moved swiftly, and yet with such practiced caution that he did not break a twig, or rustle a leaf.

After traversing about half the distance, he descended into a hollow, which, at certain seasons of the year, was a water-course, but which at this time was nothing more than a treacherous marsh. A large tree, uprooted perhaps by some violent gale, had fallen across this miry tract, and this the hunter mounted, the more easily and safely to cross. It was long and nearly devoid of branches. He had gone no more than half-way across when his quick ear caught a stealthy footstep behind him. He whirled round, just as something glittered before his eyes, and glanced from the log several yards away. It was an Indian tomahawk, and looking up he found himself face to face with the Indian who had hurled it! The red-skin had been following him. He was never slow to act in emergencies of this kind, and holding up his gun in his left hand, as a sort of shield, he drew his knife and stood on the defensive. The savage, seeing that his hatchet had failed to do its work, drew a similar weapon at the same moment, and stood glaring like some wild beast at its natural enemy. It was not a place that either would have chosen for a combat; a smooth round trunk, with no limbs by which to support themselves; but both were strong and self-confident.

It was soon over. Quick as lightning the Indian made a pass at the white man, but the murderous steel came in contact with the gun-barrel, and glanced off without inflicting a scratch on the scout. The sudden check which the blow received disconcerted the Indian, and caused him to stagger. Before he could again plant himself in a firm position, the scout put out his foot, and cleverly tripped him up. At the very same instant he plunged the entire length of his knife-blade into his adversary's side, and with a convulsive quiver of his limbs the hapless victim tumbled headlong into the slough. Looking down he beheld the savage lying motionless under the tree, with his head buried to the shoulders in mud and water. Then the hunter glanced hurriedly about, expecting to see other savages in the vicinity; but, to his surprise, not a soul was in sight, and all was still as before. The fellow who had followed him was evidently alone. Naturally pleased by this discovery, he returned his knife to his belt, and hastened on across the log.

Reaching the other side of the marsh in safety, he again pursued his way along the bank of the stream toward its mouth. The moon was still obscured by clouds, but the light was sufficient to render objects visible at a considerable distance, and fearful that he would become the prey of prying eyes, he courted the deeper gloom beneath the trees. His little adventure was assurance enough that his foes were all around him, but at the same time he was convinced that the death of the solitary brave had put no avengers on his track.

He reached the mouth of the stream without meeting further opposition. Pausing here, he crouched behind a tree and eagerly scanned the space before him. Out of the middle of the creek something black was lying on the surface

of the water. The distance was not so great but he could trace its outlines, and he at once recognized it as the identical canoe in which he and his friends had ascended the Wabash. It was perfectly stationary, and there were no signs of life about it, but this did not seem to alarm the observer.

He gave vent to the low, clear whistle so often used by him as a signal, and then coming out of his concealment, he stepped into the water and began to wade toward the canoe. Something like a human head rose above the gunwale of the craft, and there remained as if watching him. Then another one appeared, after that a third, and as he approached nearer he was greeted by a low whine from his dog, Moses.

"It's me, boys," he said, in a low tone, as he waded alongside. "Don't be afeard."

"Faix! who's goin' to be afeard?" returned the Irishman. "Divil a wurrid did we say 'bout bein' afeard at all."

"This is quite a surprise, uncle," said Haldrick, without heeding Denny's remark. "We did not expect you to come from that direction."

"Wal, yer see, it's sometimes best for the safety of a body's top-knot to take d'reckshuns what yer ain't expected to take," was the significant rejoinder. "Hyr, lads; give me a lift."

Each grasped an arm of the hunter, and drew him into the canoe. Surprised that the craft should lay so motionless in the current, he found that it was resting in the fork of a snag, whose shape and position could not have been more compatible with the service required of it.

"I reckon," continued the scout, patting his dog's head, "as how you ain't the only ones what expected me to kum from t'other d'reckshun. That's the reason I didn't do it."

"But what has happened?" asked Haldrick anxiously. "We heard a commotion over toward the bluff. You are not hurt?"

"No; 'cept a scratch on my forehead."

"And Wistah and Deer Foot? They have not returned with you. Surely, they have not been killed?"

"Lord! I hope not," replied the scout earnestly. "I hope not—I hope not! But I can't tell. We'll wait hyr a minute in spite of the danger, and give 'em a chance to turn up."

Thereupon he briefly related to his companions all that had occurred since his departure with Deer Foot and the wild girl.

"When he had finished, Denny exclaimed:

"Begorra, it's lucky the rid nagurs didn't git howld iv the dimijohn—ain't it, Misther Linkin, I dunno?"

Without replying in words, Josh surrendered the flask to the Irishman, who almost emptied it.

A few minutes passed, which the three men occupied by maintaining a sharp lookout, and listening intently. By and by, the scout whispered:

"Look—d'yer see that?"

"What?" asked his companions in a breath.

Josh was pointing up the creek. Allowing their gaze to be guided by his finger, they saw a long, black object floating toward them. Haldrick looked at his uncle in surprise.

"Why, that is only a log," he said.

"I know it's only a log," was the cool reply, "but you know 'tain't nat'ral fur driftwood to kum down in low water."

"Very true; but what of that? Somebody has evidently pushed it into the creek for want of something else to do."

"Bah! look at it ag'in. You see it lays across the current and floats broadside. It wouldn't do that ef the current had run its own way. Logs ginerally float eend foremost. Ef you'd happen to see one driftin' up-stream, how would you 'count fur it?"

"You puzzle me."

"Do, eh? Look thar."

This time their gaze was directed down-stream. There, sure enough, another log was visible, and it, like the first, was slowly approaching them!

"Uncle, what does this mean?" demanded Haldrick, as a suspicion of the truth flashed upon him for the first time.

"It means that we are 'bout to be 'tacked by Injuns," returned the scout quietly. "Both of them logs conceal a number of the red imps, and they're hemmin' us in on both sides. Keep cool, boys; we're in a mighty tight fix, I allow, and I'm afeard it's all up with us, but ef it comes to that, I reckon we mought as well die game as any other way. See that yer shooters are fit fur work, and stoop down so as you won't make too fine a mark fur the red-skins' rifles. The fu'st noddle you see, plug it. Give me the paddle; we've got to make a dash fur it. Ef we kin reach the bank and get into the woods, thar's some hope fur us."

"But there may be Indians on the bank waiting for such a movement on our part," suggested Haldrick.

"May be—can't help it—got to take the chances. Now, ar' you both ready? Be still, Moses!"

Announcing themselves ready, Josh wielded the paddle with skill and effect, and the canoe dropped back from the snag. Then it swung round and went skimming toward the shore with the speed of a water-fowl.

A sheet of fire shot out from behind each of the floating logs, as the Indians saw that their ruse was discovered: but the bullets whistled over the canoe, leaving its occupants unharmed. A blood-curdling whoop followed the discharge of firearms, and although no part of a savage's body was exposed in the excitement of the moment, both of the logs headed directly toward the canoe, and began to move much faster than before.

A few vigorous sweeps of the paddle, and the light vessel struck the bank. At the same moment it touched the old hunter sprung out upon the land, followed by his companions.

"Now, lads, we're in fur a race! Come on, quick! It's a matter of life and death—Jerusalem!"

He staggered backward, as the ejaculation burst from his lips. And well he might, for just then a chorus of whoops and shrieks rent the air, and a cloud of dusky forms issued from the darkness of the woods and surrounded them.

"Mash my head!" exclaimed the scout. "You was right, youngster; these varmints have been waitin' hyr fur us to fall into tha'r arms."

Dod cuss tha'r bloody picters! they've got us foul now. Stand yer ground, boys, and die fightin'!"

Pale but calm, they all clutched their rifles with the determination to sell their lives dearly. They fired simultaneously and with good effect, into the yelling throng, and then planted themselves back to back to receive the expected onset.

But it now became evident that the intention of the Indians was not to kill, but to capture the whites. They did not return shot for shot; neither did they make a display of knives or tomahawks, but, on the contrary, they rushed upon the three men empty-handed.

The struggle was brief—it could not be otherwise under such circumstances. In less time than it would take to describe the event, our friends were bound hand and foot, and lying helplessly side by side on the ground.

Then the whoops and yells were deafening. The savages who propelled the logs, landed and added their voices to the hideous concert. While these extravagant expressions of exultation were going on, a piercing shriek suddenly rose above the din. Quiet was immediately restored and all eyes turned toward the spot whence the boding cry had proceeded. The sight that met their gaze called forth ejaculations of horror and rage. Unobserved by his comrades, one of the Indians had engaged in a fight with Josh Lincoln's dog, and the brute had got the better of his two-legged adversary. When the sharp cry called the attention of the other Indians, the unfortunate man was lying on his back, and Moses was savagely tearing his throat.

A dozen warriors sprung to the assistance of their brother. Eluding the blows that were aimed at him, the dog scampered away and was seen no more. The neck of the victim was terribly lacerated and bloody, and when his would-be rescuers felt for the pulsation of his heart, they found none. Life was already extinct. Howls of lamentation mingled with the whoops, that were now resumed as loudly as ever.

Josh chuckled inwardly at the characteristic achievement of his dog. It was not the first time the fearless animal had taken the life of a human being, for he was almost as earnest an Indian-hater as his master, and seldom lost an opportunity to gain victories of this kind.

The old scout's mirth was checked by the crack of a rifle. He started as it fell upon his ears, for to him there was something at once peculiar and familiar in the sound. He had heard that report too often to be deceived in it; undoubtedly it emanated from the little silver-mounted piece, belonging to Wistah. He was sure of it.

At first he supposed the weapon was in the hands of one of the Indians, who was firing it for a signal, or merely for amusement. But when he heard a groan, and felt warm blood sprinkled in his face, and saw a human form stagger over his body and fall to the earth, he knew that the gun was still in the hands of its owner.

He raised his head, and Haldrick and Denny did the same. At that moment the clear, ringing laugh of the Child Spy filled the air with music, and she was heard to cry out:

"Take that, you red wolves, and catch Wistah if you can! Ha, ha, ha!"

They saw her now. She was out on the creek, in her own little canoe. She was standing up; only her form was discernible in the gloom, but it could be seen that she had exchanged the rifle for a paddle, which she was plying most diligently. The shell-like bark was darting along with the current, with considerable velocity.

Two or three of the Indians discharged their guns at her, but their aim was not good, and no harm was done. The child's mocking cry came back in answer to the shouts.

"Catch Wistah if you can! Ha, ha, ha!"

The next instant her canoe was swept out upon the broad bosom of the Wabash, and the little Indian-slayer was swallowed up in the darkness. None of the savages evinced the slightest disposition to give chase. Apparently they entertained superstitious fancies concerning this wonderful child.

A silence had now come over the red band, and preparations to return to the cave were hastily completed. Even in his own misfortune, Josh Lincoln was happy to know that Wistah was still alive and at liberty.

The captives were placed in the canoe and rowed up the river to the bluff.

Here they were landed and carried into the cavern by the main entrance.

CHAPTER XI.

ONE LIFE FOR SEVEN.

To say that the captives were disheartened when they saw the three brave men brought into the cave in a helpless condition, would scarcely give an idea of what they felt. Who would be their champion now?

Ruth hung her head, and thought of the promise she had given Frondeau: "If by no other means my father can be saved from death, and my mother from a life of drudgery, then, to accomplish this, I will become thy wife one week from to-day." She had thought she was safe in saying that, for it was immediately after her conversation with the Piankashaw, who had promised to bring friends to the assistance of herself and parents that very night. But the bubble was broken now. Those upon whom she had depended for the preservation of her father's life were now prisoners like herself. The week would soon flit by; she could not violate her declaration at the expense of her parent's existence.

Ah! where was Deer Foot? He was not here. Probably he was still enjoying life and freedom; and, if so, would he not come to the rescue? She found comfort in the thought, and allowed herself to build up hope on the supposed possibility.

The Indians in the cave—a number of whom had stretched themselves on their blankets to sleep—were aroused by the noisy entrance of the party who had captured our three friends; and although the hour was late, everybody in the cave was wide awake. The Indians were mad with excitement when they realized that Josh Lincoln was in their power. His capture repaid them for all they had lost. The fire was replenished, and the scout was dragged into the light, that all might satisfy themselves of his identity and glut their eyes upon his hated face.

He did not betray his annoyance, but bore it all with assumed indifference.

Frondeau was there, and his delight equaled that of his followers. He did not express it so extravagantly, but it showed itself in the glitter of his eyes, and the triumphant smile that lurked about his mouth. Presenting himself in front of the new prisoners he said, satirically:

"*Ma fois*, gentlemen, this is a becoming situation for such as you, and you have my promise that no one of you will ever leave this cave alive. It is a fitting place for you, and here your bones shall bleach till doomsday. You understand me? You have slain a number of my best warriors, and you will find out at an early day what my vengeance will be."

"Oh, git out, ye bla'guard!" interposed Denny. "Divil, a ha'penny do we dare about havin' our fortunes tould to-night. Jist give me a swig iv the whisky I smell on yer breath, and I'll kiss ye good-night, and go to shla'pe."

"Hold your tongue, you Irish fool!" commanded the Frenchman. "If it were not for sparing you the pain of a worse death, I'd shoot you in your tracks."

"I advise ye to do it anyway, me b'y," said Denny, coolly. "Yeez might knock me over now as aisy as fallin' off iv a log, ye know, wid me hands tied 'ahind me; and 'tain't sart'in as ye'll iver have another chance. As the ould sayin' is, 'there's minny a ship 'twixt the cup and the lip.'"

"*Le diable!*" growled the Frenchman, and trembling with rage he drew a knife from his belt.

"Be jabbers! that'll do the work as well as a bullet, I'm thinkin'," said the Irishman, looking at the weapon. "Now be sure ye make short work iv me."

"Bah! your time will come soon enough."

With that Frondeau stooped and cut the cords that bound Josh Lincoln's feet. Then, rising, he returned the knife to his belt and took the hunter by the arm.

"Come with me," he said, curtly. "I have something to show you."

Josh looked surprised, but said nothing. With a show of cool indifference he permitted himself to be led, and Frondeau escorted him to the furthest corner of the chamber.

Here was a large stone, about three feet high, with a broad smooth top, like a table. On this stone an object was lying, all covered over with a blanket. Frondeau lifted a corner of the blanket, and said, solemnly:

"Behold!"

The scout looked, and a strange thrill pervaded his being. Beneath the covering lay the dead body of an Indian. One glance at the ugly features sufficed to show him that the deceased was no other than Le Buffle.

"You see the work of your own hand," continued the villain. "It was you who killed him."

"How d'yer know that?" demanded the scout.

"I recognize the track of your bullet," he answered, promptly. "I have seen it too often not to know it. Dare you deny—"

"Dar' I!" exclaimed the scout, contemptuously. "Thar's a heap of things I dar' do, as

you're in a fa'r way to find out 'fore you're many days older. But this is sunktin' I don't want to deny. I'm glad to say that I *did* knock the daylight out of this durned varmint, and I hope the day ain't fur off when I'll git a chance to give you a dose of the same kind."

"Your punishment will be bad enough as it is," said the Frenchman, with a sneer. "If you are fortunate enough to survive your present misfortune, I will be willing to take the dose you mention. Look at these Indians. The death of their chief has maddened them. They thirst for your blood, and no earthly power can prevent them from having it."

Josh looked at the speaker, with an amused smile playing about his lips.

"Ef yer think sich talk ar' goin' to skeer me, Frenchy, I reckon I'd better tell yer as how you're wastin' words."

Frondeau colored up, and appeared inexpressibly confused. Then, blurting out a number of badly-assorted oaths, he led his imperturbable prisoner back to the spot where he had left Haldrick and Denny. The scout's ankles were again tied, and the three new captives were thrown into a corner by themselves.

Josh Lincoln was still puzzled about Deer Foot. He knew, beyond the possibility of a doubt, that the Piankashaw and Le Buffle had fallen from the bluff together. The latter was killed by a bullet, and he had feared that the former was killed by the fall. But, here was the body of Le Buffle, where was that of Deer Foot? Surely, if it had been found, Frondeau would have said something to him about it. Possibly the chief had escaped unhurt, but it was hardly probable. The fall was a long one, and was not likely to leave him with strength enough to get away with his life.

When the excitement had abated, the Indians—all except those who composed the guard—lay down to sleep, and a few minutes later silence reigned in the marauders' den. The fire was kept alive, however, and the guards were vigilant. The captives tried to snatch a few minutes of blissful unconsciousness, but what with their mental suffering, and the impossibility of securing a comfortable position, none were positively successful except Josh Lincoln and Denny. These two worthies curled themselves up on the stone floor, and slept soundly until long after daylight. They awoke considerably refreshed.

The day dragged slowly by. The captives were not once moved, but Frondeau visited them frequently to examine their fastenings. Small squads of Indians were continually coming and going throughout the day, but there was not a moment when less than twenty-five of them were in the cave. The whites did not want for food. Three times—morning, noon and night—they were provided with as much as they desired, and were allowed the use of their hands while eating. But they were not permitted to talk to one another, and this restriction made time drag more heavily on their hands. Haldrick watched Ruth Shelbridge, as she sat demurely on a pile of furs, with her parents and Phillis, and chafed because he was powerless to help her. The old scout seemed as unconcerned as if he were reclining in his own cabin, while Denny was as jolly and reckless as ever, and

really appeared more buoyant in spirit than he had been for many a day. During the afternoon the body of Le Buffle was carried out of that compartment into another, which the marauders had set apart for the burial of their dead.

Where was Wistah?—and, if living, what had become of Deer Foot? Much unexpressed wonder concerning these two persons rankled in the minds of the pale-faces, but nothing occurred to give them a clue to the whereabouts of their friends. They were enabled to conclude pretty definitely, however, that the savages who were out at intervals during the day had discovered no traces of the wild girl and the Piankashaw.

Night came at last. The shadows deepened to positive darkness in the cavern, and again the fire was kindled in the center of the chamber. After the Indians had discussed their evening meal, according to their own custom, they spent an hour in the soothing companionship of their pipes, and then, one by one, resigned themselves to Morpheus. Frondeau made his bed on the table of stone, where the body of Le Buffle had laid on the preceding night.

The weary captives experienced no difficulty in seeking forgetfulness in sleep, and by midnight not one of them remained awake, and the underground chamber resounded with the music of snoring sleepers.

Josh Lincoln was in the midst of an interesting dream when he was awakened by a touch on his shoulder. He opened his eyes and looked around. At first he saw nothing, but as his vision became clearer he espied a female form bending over him, holding a glittering knife in her hand.

It was the Child Spy! Being now thoroughly awake, he recognized her little form and fanciful costume. He made a movement, and found, to his surprise, that his hands and feet were free. The cords had been cut.

He rose cautiously. The fire was low, and the cave shrouded in semi-darkness. Wrapped in their blankets and robes, the savage sleepers were strewn about promiscuously—some lying at full length, while others sat bolt upright with their backs against the wall. Frondeau was stretched out upon the stone, fast asleep.

"Here," said Wistah, in a scarcely audible whisper; "take this and release your two friends. Lead them out to the river. Two canoes are waiting there; yours and Wistah's. Big canoe carry six. All get in but you and me—we take little one."

As she spoke, she slipped a knife into the scout's hand. He was about to say something, but she turned from him abruptly and glided away to the corner occupied by the Quaker family and the old negress. It was a desperate venture, and for a moment the hardy scout seemed to hesitate. Then, shutting his teeth and flashing a quick glance over the sleeping forms of his captors, he bent down and stealthily cut the thongs that bound Haldrick and Denny. He next woke them. As they opened their eyes, he put his finger on his lips to enjoin silence. They both understood the tacit injunction, and remained mute.

By signs the hunter then commanded them to rise and follow him. They obeyed with alacrity.

With slow and noiseless tread, the trio picked their way across the room, fearful that each step would rouse the nearest Indian. No such calamity occurred, however, and reaching the mouth of the cave they passed out in safety. It was a clear, moonlight night. The white shingle glistened under the flood of light, and the river seemed converted into a stream of molten silver. The dead body of an Indian warrior lay on the sand. It was the guard. A knife had been driven to his heart, and the Child Spy had undoubtedly dealt the blow. There were two canoes at the water's edge. One of them was the same in which the scout and his friends had ascended the Wabash; the other was of smaller size, and was recognized as Wistah's own.

As they approached the larger vessel, they were greeted by a joyful whine, and the faithful Moses rose into view to receive his master.

"Be still, you brute!" commanded Josh. "I'm powerful glad to see you, but this is no time fur embracin'. Now, boys, git in hyur—quick!—thar ain't no time to be lost! Thar's three paddles—you and the Quaker will have to use 'em."

At this moment the rest of the party appeared, emerging from the cave. Ruth and Phillis were in advance, and behind them Ephraim and his wife. They approached hurriedly, and the fat negress breathed in audible gasps.

"Bress—de Lord—" she began; but the scout silenced her.

"Be still, you ebony porpoise!" he commanded, in a tone that had the desired effect. "This ar' no time to bless the Lord. Don't speak a word, but tumble yer black karkidge into this canoe as quick as yer kin. That's right. Now, the rest of yer climb in. Hyur, Eph; you and the boys handle the sticks. Strike the current, and work hard."

As soon as they were all seated, the scout gave the canoe a push that sent it far out toward the middle of the river.

Then he turned to look for Wistah. To his surprise he did not see her. Where was she? A sudden fear seized him, and his eyes sought the face of the bluff. His countenance brightened up on the instant, for he beheld her coming out of the cave. The moonlight fell full upon her as she issued from the darkness of the underground vault. She cast her gaze behind, as if expecting pursuit, and swiftly approached the river.

She had passed over about two-thirds of the distance, when the crack of a rifle woke the echoes, and she stopped. Slowly unfolding its dark coils, the rattlesnake slipped from the girl's neck, and fell to the ground, where it writhed in the agonies of death. The shot had struck the serpent, and left its mistress untouched! The poor girl paused to look at her murdered pet; her own doom was sealed by the act. There was a yell within the cavern, followed by several rifle-shots in quick succession.

Wistah started violently, and clutched her side. Then she groped forward a step or two, like a blind person, and fell prone upon the ground.

The sight seemed to almost craze the hunter. The expression of his face was terrible to see. With a shout that was nearly a shriek, he ran

forward in the face of the danger, and raised the child from the ground. Then, holding her in his arms, he bounded back to the canoe. Placing his burden gently in the bottom of the craft, he sprung in himself, snatched up the paddle and pushed off, just as two or three bullets whistled about his head.

CHAPTER XII.

THE CHILD SPY'S LAST SHOT.

WITH his eye on the Indians—who were now plainly seen, as they swarmed out of the cavern—Josh Lincoln sunk the ashen blade deep in the water, and made the little shell fairly dance over the surface. No more shots were fired at him. He saw the savages moving hastily about near the base of the bluff, and a moment later was not surprised to see them carry three large canoes down to the brink of the river and launch them. Their aim was to recapture, not to kill him. With exultant yells the dusky crew started the little fleet in hot pursuit, and then began a race for life.

The scout saw that his foes possessed all the advantage, but his face remained hard and expressionless. The Indian canoes were propelled by more than a dozen paddles! What could his single pair of arms do against so many? He glanced ahead. Far down the river he saw a black speck dancing in the moonlight. He knew it was the canoe occupied by his friends, and was glad they had gained such a start. With three strong men wielding their paddles, they might escape; but what hope was there for him? Still he did not despair. Keeping in the swiftest part of the current, he threw all his energy into the task, and labored till the perspiration rolled from his brow, while beneath the buckskin sleeves of his hunting-shirt could be seen the play of his powerful muscles, rising and falling with every stroke.

It was useless. His pursuers had been gaining ground from the very start, and now he saw the distance between him and them growing rapidly less. Already he was in gunshot, but he was not fired upon. Apparently the Indians foresaw an easy capture, and thought to preserve him for a worse death.

For the first time since pushing off from the shore, he now glanced down at Wistah. The poor child was lying motionless in the bottom of the boat, but somehow to his surprise he observed that she was conscious. Her large, luminous orbs were fixed upon his face with a look of wistful inquiry. Instantly, the scout's features relaxed a little, and something very like a tear mingled with the perspiration on his cheek.

"Child," he said, in a voice that was by no means steady, "are you hurt bad?"

"Yes," was the quiet response; "Wistah will die."

"No, no, little 'un; you mustn't say that!"

The hunter spoke vehemently, and almost ceased rowing; but quick bethinking himself, he set to work again diligently, as if determined to make up the lost moment.

"You mustn't say that, little 'un," he repeated, more calmly, as he made a half-successful effort to gulp down his emotion. "You're too young to die. Let me do sunkthin' fur you."

She shook her head sorrowfully.

An expression of intense pain flitted across the pale face of the sufferer; and as soon as it passed, she looked up and spoke rapidly:

"We are pursued—Wistah has been listening—the Indians are coming fast—they will catch us soon. Look and tell me—is Frondeau there?"

"Sart'in. He's standin' up in the fore part of the fastest canoe, usin' a paddle."

A new fire blazed in her eyes, and she laid her hand on her rifle, which was resting beside her.

"One thing Wistah must do before she dies," said she, firmly. "Her end is near, and Frondeau still lives. From the grave, her mother calls for vengeance. The Frenchman must die!"

The scout started, but said nothing.

"My gun is here," continued the wounded girl. "Place it in my hands and lift me up, so that I may shoot him."

Only for a moment did Josh Lincoln hesitate. He quietly laid down the paddle, put his arms gently around the slender form of the child, and lifted her from her prostrate position. Turning her face toward the pursuers, he knelt in the bottom of the boat, and supported her in such a manner that she had the free use of her arms. Then he gave her the rifle. She raised it to her shoulder, and took deliberate aim.

Frondeau could not have offered a more tempting mark. He was in the bow of the foremost boat, standing up, with a paddle in his hands, which he was using vigorously.

"Give it to him, little 'un," whispered the scout. "Dod cuss his hide! let him have it plum'-center."

The words had scarcely parted from his tongue, ere the keen report went echoing over the water, and the bullet sped on its mission of death. The Frenchman was seen to throw up his hands, stagger wildly a moment, and then tumble headlong into the river. Wistah dropped her empty gun, and stretching her arms toward heaven, an unearthly expression illumined her sweet face. She cried, in pathetic tones:

"Mother! mother! your child is coming now. Her work is done at last!"

Then she sunk back, a dead weight in the hunter's arms.

Wistah, the Child Spy, was no more.

A gasping sob, such as Josh Lincoln had never before known, was now wrung from his almost bursting heart, as he tenderly laid the body down. After closing the sightless eyes, he stood erect, and shot a look of unutterable hatred at the pursuers. The canoes had stopped to recover the body of Frondeau, but were now coming on as swiftly as ever.

With clinched teeth, and a look that betokened a settled purpose, the scout took up his paddle and resumed his work.

"I'll lead the imps a long chase," he muttered, "and then sell my life fur all it'll bring."

By this time he had reached a well-known island. It was a narrow strip of land in the middle of the river, covered by a dense growth of willow trees. He had frequently encamped there when journeying by water, but now he merely bestowed upon it a passing glance as he slightly changed the course of the canoe so that it would sweep round the island.

Before he could leave it in the rear he was startled by a very familiar voice accosting him from the shadow of the willows.

"Here, uncle—stop! Turn in here, quick! We are saved!"

Josh Lincoln drew his paddle out of the water and sat still, half stupefied with wonder. Before he could recover himself sufficiently to answer, a broad, red flame lit up the darkness at the head of the island he had just passed, and was accompanied by a crash of fire-arms. Then there rose a terrible war whoop—loud, long and blood-curdling—mingled with yells and shrieks from wounded savages; and a minute later five large canoes, all filled with Indian warriors, darted into view, and went skimming over the glimmering water to finish the work so well begun! What could it mean?

"Verily, friend Joshua, thou needst go no further," cried the rich, sonorous voice of Ephraim Shelbridge. "Come hither and join us. We are rescued by our good friend, Deer Foot!"

This aroused the scout from his temporary inertia, and without further hesitancy he dashed up under the drooping willows, where stood a group of persons ready to receive him—Haldrick, Denny, the Quakers, Phillis and the dog.

"What does all this shootin' and yellin' mean?" demanded the scout, as he touched the shore.

"It means, uncle," replied Haldrick, cheerfully, "that Deer Foot is here, with no less than fifty followers, and has intercepted—Ha! what have you there?"

Josh had bent over the canoe and was lifting something in his arms.

"This," said he, in a choking voice, as he pressed the object to his bosom, "this, my friends, is all that is left of poor little Wistah."

Deer Foot and his band of warriors completely exterminated the pursuers. The occupants of the three canoes were all killed—not one being left to carry the story of the massacre to his tribe—and then the victors returned to the island, laden with scalps.

Poor little Wistah! A grave was dug on the island for her, and there were many sad hearts in the party when the mortal remains of the noble child were consigned to their last resting-place. Some time afterward the old scout heard the history of the Child Spy, from Deer Foot, who had known her from infancy. We give it in brief.

Her mother had once been a beautiful Indian girl, and was the daughter of a great chief, belonging to a tribe of Pottawatomies. At that time, when clothed in the rapturous charms of budding womanhood, she was beloved by Deer Foot, the young chief of the Piankashaws, who doubtless would have borne her in triumph to his lodge, but for the opposition of a rival, who began to exert his powers just in time to defeat the brave Indian. This rival was no other than Frondeau, the Frenchman. In his travels among the tribes he met this savage beauty, was pleased with her, praised her loveliness in his slick-

tongued way, deceived her cruelly with stories of his devotion, spent a month in her charming society as her accepted and recognized husband, brought her to such a stage of adoration that she would have laid down her life for him, and then—like the inhuman wretch that he was—deserted her! When she gave birth to her child the poor, heart-broken creature died; but the babe lived, and was called Wistah. From its infancy Deer Foot watched the growth of the orphaned waif, and years afterward, when he deemed it old enough to fully understand the case, he told it the story of its mother's love and devotion. He had craved revenge himself, but had, with savage magnanimity, reserved it for the one deeper wronged. Ever after the story was breathed into her ears, the poor child was subject to spells of partial insanity when thoughts of her mother's wrong recurred to her. How she dogged Frondeau from place to place—playing with him as a cat plays with a mouse, and finally killing him in the very last moment of her own brief career—has been told.

When morning came the party divided. Deer Foot and his band went on up the river, to attack the Indians that had been left in the cave, while the old scout and his band resumed their journey down-stream to a place of safety.

Reaching Vincennes without accident, they were warmly welcomed by Grandmother Shelbridge and Caesar. Though the parting had not been for long, yet circumstances rendered the meeting a joyful one, and there was much thanksgiving.

Deer Foot's expedition was a complete success. Arriving at the cave he surprised the remnant of the marauding band, and killed all but two or three of the miserable wretches. Then, taking possession of the cave, he secured the horses belonging to Haldrick, Denny and Ephraim Shelbridge, and all the chattels that had been stolen from the house of the latter. The Irishman was happy in the recovery of his animal.

Instead of returning to his house in the woods, the Quaker had not been in Vincennes forty-eight hours before he had sold it to the highest bidder, and announced his intention of returning to the East. Having lost faith in the aborigines, he had resolved, while languishing in captivity, that if his life was spared he would remove his family from that unsafe country; and having once made up his mind, it was impossible for any one else to change it. During the weeks that preceded the departure, Haldrick and Ruth were much in each other's society, and somehow it came about that, before the Quakers had started, our hero suddenly decided that he, also, had seen quite enough of this outlandish region! So they all returned to the East together—Denny, of course, accompanying them.

But old Josh Lincoln remained on the frontier, and many were the thrilling adventures he passed through, with his noble friend, Deer Foot, and his faithful dog, Moses. He lived to wreak a terrible revenge on the Indian race, for the murder of the Child Spy, and died in the conviction that he had performed his duty according to the will of Heaven.

Haldrick and Ruth were happily married, and Denny served them to the last.

THE END.

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